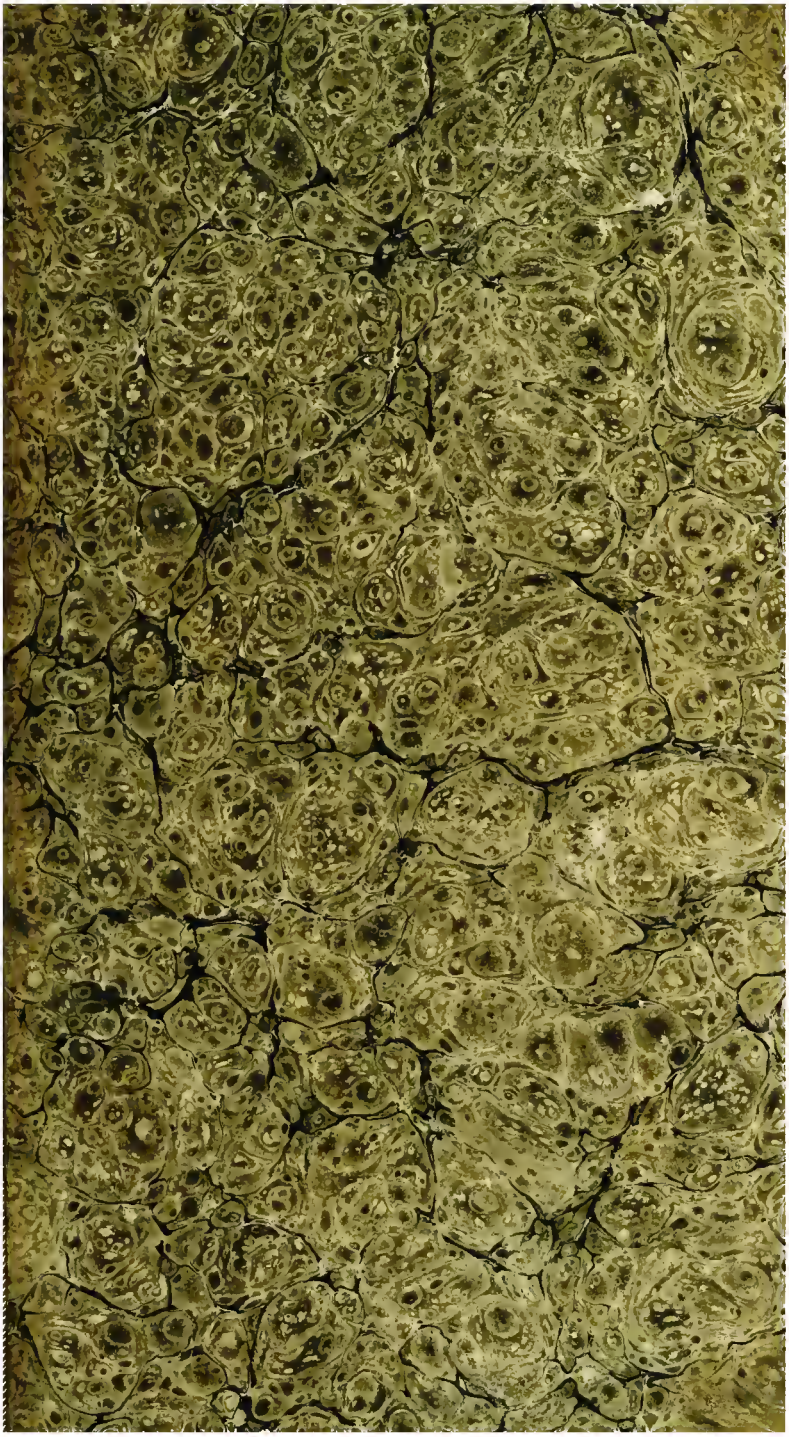
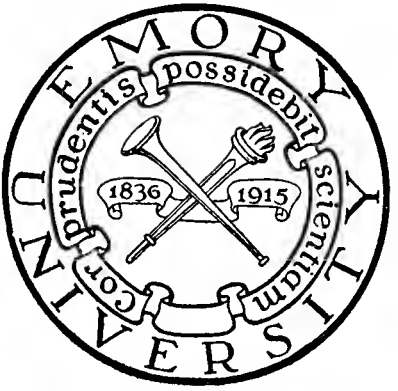


EMORY UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY



TALES OF FANCY,

BY

S. H. BURNEY.

VOL. I.

THE SHIPWRECK.

TALES OF FANCY;

BY

S. H. BURNEY.

AUTHOR OF

CLARENTINE, TRAITS OF NATURE, &c.

VOL. I.

THE SHIPWRECK.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HENRY COLBURN & CO.

PUBLIC LIBRARY, CONDUIT STREET, HANOVER SQUARE.

1820.

B. Clarke, Printer, Well-street, London.

TO

THE RIGHT HON. LADY CREWE.

MADAM,

In obtaining the permission with which your Ladyship has honoured me of inscribing to you this little volume, I feel even more gratification as a daughter, than pride as an author. You were the long-tried and faithful friend of my revered father; and the favour you are now conferring upon one of his descendants, may justly be considered as a tribute of affection to his memory. In that light, be assured, that I view it; since blind as we commonly are to our own insignificance, I am not *so* blind, as to be unconscious how slender are my claims, either as an author or an individual, to your Ladyship's attention.

May I be permitted to say a few words on the subject of the volume itself.

I am very anxious to prevail upon your Ladyship to believe in the *possibility*, at least, of the leading circumstance of my story. Nothing but an absolute Fairy Tale can be tolerated, the ground-work of which is utterly incredible. I was so apprehensive of having entangled myself in an error of this sort, that, to set my own mind at ease, I stated my doubts and fears, ere I had proceeded further than the first two or three chapters, to a naval officer well qualified to resolve them, and requested his sincere opinion, in writing, of the practicability of finding for my shipwrecked sufferers, such an asylum as I wanted, exactly in the station where I wished to place them. The following is an extract from his answer:

"There is good room in the Indian Ocean
"for an island, or several—and large enough
"for the required purpose, in places where
"it is not certain that any ship has been.
"Therefore, *a new discovery* is admissible.
"The ship should be outward bound, and
"sailing in time of war, when, to avoid
"the danger of an enemy, she may be sup-
"posed to steer in a more southerly track
"than in time of peace.—The island may

" doubtless be fertile in fruits, in volcanos,
" and in any other matters that may be con-
" venient.

" I hope a prosperous Shipwreck can be
" made out of these materials, and am truly
" your's, &c."

Was it not lawful, upon such authority, to proceed? I found the temptation irresistible; for the story had caught my own fancy; I began to love my island, and to have a true oriental relish for cocoa-trees, and mangoes, for fragrant gales, and unclouded skies.

That your Ladyship may be induced to adopt a little of this taste, is very fervently my wish. I am well aware, indeed, that to a discriminating and observant mind like your's, a fiction less romantic---a tale founded on contrasts of character, and delineations of " living manners," would have been more acceptable. But this is only saying, in other words, that your Ladyship loves excellence,---a species of excellence, alas! beyond my power of attainment: and I suspect, that I did very wisely in confining myself to a track where local description

and mere adventure might supply the place of sense.

Deign, however, dear Madam, with all its deficiencies, to bestow on this humble offering an indulgent reception; and to believe, that next to the wish of doing honour to myself by prefixing to it your name, my highest ambition was to give a sincere testimony of the perfect deference and respect with which I am

Your Ladyship's
Most grateful and obedient
Humble servant,
S. H. BURNEY.

Chelsea College,
December 1, 1815.

THE SHIPWRECK.

A Tale.

BY

S. H. BURNEY.

La fede unqua non deve esser corrotta,
O data a un solo, o data insieme a mille,
E così in un selva, in una grotta,
Lontan dalle cittadi e dalle ville,
Come dinanzi a tribunali, in frotta
Di testimon, di scritti e di postille.
Senza giurare, o segno altro più expresso,
Basti una volta che s'abbia promesso.

ARIOSTO

Good faith should ever be held pure from taint,
Whether to one, or to a thousand pledged;
Whether in cave forlorn, or forest wild,
Remote from cities and the haunts of men,
Or facing a tribunal, and amidst
A crowd of witnesses, and formal bonds.—
Leave oaths and records tó the base! enough,
'Mongst men who've honour, is a promise giv'n.

THE SHIPWRECK.

A TALE.

CHAP. I.

O, the cry did knock
Against my very heart! Poor souls! they perished.
SHAKESPEAR.

A LARGE East Indiaman, proceeding in company with several others from England to Bengal, and sailing a more southerly track than is usual, to avoid the danger of an enemy (it being time of war), was separated from the rest of the fleet by a furious storm; and after passing in sight, as well as the mariners were able to ascertain, of the island of Amsterdam, between the Cape of Good Hope, and New Holland, was wrecked, in steering to the north-east, upon

a ridge of rocks which nearly encircled a small detached island in the Indian Ocean.

Amongst the passengers, most of whom perished in the wreck, or in unsuccessful endeavours to escape from it in the overcrowded boats, two females, almost miraculously, survived the tremendous catastrophe;—a mother and daughter; who, when assailed by a calamity so awful, were steering in high spirits, to join, the one a husband, the other a father, holding a distinguished station in Hindostan. The former of these rescued individuals, Lady Earlingford, a woman of incomparable fortitude, and very rare mental endowments, had, on the first conviction of undoubted danger, adopted the advice of one of the most experienced seamen; and directed her attendants to assist her in lashing to the fragment of a broken mast her almost senseless daughter. The boats, she was assured, would very speedily cease to afford the slightest prospect of security: so many were struggling to obtain admission into them, that even the most sanguine could scarcely entertain a hope of their resisting the violence of the waves. As a last act

of humanity, therefore, she supplicated the servants, just before they ventured upon the perilous expedient of leaping overboard, to attach her to the same rude instrument of preservation which she had, though not without the most agonizing solicitude, chosen for her child. This final command was faithfully obeyed: and the event proved that the measure, hopeless as it was, and such as she herself almost contemplated with despair, teemed with wisdom. Shortly after it had been adopted, the increasing tumult around her—the roar of the elements, the cries of the distracted mariners, and the crashing of the vessel—became so hideous and overwhelming, that Lady Earlingford, stunned and appalled, lost all power of observation, and only recovered her perceptions to find herself afloat upon the tide, in utter darkness, without any consciousness of the circumstances which had immediately preceded her separation from the sinking vessel. Her first impulse was, to stretch forth her hand to ascertain the vicinity of her daughter; and having convinced herself that they were not disunited, she breathed forth

a grateful ejaculation, and submitted, with patient courage, to every other evil attendant upon her hazardous and melancholy situation.

After a night of suffering too awful and severe ever to be remembered without a sensation of shuddering horror, Lady Earlingford beheld herself, at dawn of day, within reach, if not absolutely touching, the sandy coast of what appeared to her a well-shaded, and even beautiful little island. The centre of this verdant spot, rendered solemn by its profound stillness, was crowned by a conical mountain of prodigious height, whose sides were cleft into deep channels. Its shape and whole aspect denoted it to be volcanic: but, by the fertility reigning at its base, there was reason to imagine that it had been visited by no recent eruption. One end of the mast, to which Lady Earlingford was bound, already grazed upon the beach; and, dreading lest every returning billow should wash it out again to sea, she hastened to cut asunder the cords with which she was confined: and then, stepping into the shallow water, she directed all her

efforts to the liberation of her young companion, whose faculties seemed so completely suspended, partly from excess of terror, and partly from the benumbing effects of so long an exposure to the wet and cold, that she was as little able to assist herself when released from her bonds, as whilst still forcibly attached to the mast. Her mother, with incredible difficulty, drew her out of the surge. She placed her under the shelter of some shrubs and bushes growing on the beach; and beneath which, mixed with a fine white sand, a scanty herbage found sustenance. This spot, perfectly dry, and fenced a few paces further, by a cluster of lofty palm trees, faced the eastern sun, now rising in full glory, and darting its warm and invigorating rays upon their drenched and aching limbs.

Here, whilst Lady Earlingford, having spread their upper garments upon the sand to dry, sat supporting upon her knees the head of her pale and speechless fellow-sufferer, every reflection that assailed her was of the most painful and terrific nature. Thankfulness to Heaven for immediate preservation could not repress a thousand disastrous

presages relative to their future destiny. Was the island inhabited? Fervently did she pray that it might *not!* No evils which they might be fated to endure from privations of every description, appeared to the parent's anxious heart half so dreadful as those which her affrighted fancy conjured up from a horde of lawless Indians. At the moment these apprehensions rushed into her mind, her eye rested upon her daughter, and never was pity more tender, — more heart-breaking, than that with which she regarded her. The eminent beauty of the ill-fated girl, which, under happier circumstances, had attracted universal admiration, was, even in this hour of complicated distress, obscured only, but not impaired. She had just attained her seventeenth year; and, drooping, exhausted as she was—her eyes languidly closed—her hair dripping and dishevelled—her features inanimate, and her complexion pale as marble, there was a melancholy sweetness in her aspect—she looked so young, so innocent, and her lot appeared so peculiarly hard, that it was impossible to contemplate her without the deepest compassion.

"For what, my poor Viola," cried Lady Earlingford, as she hung weeping over her, "for what art thou reserved? With all this beauty, in the prime and freshness of thy youth, with so much elegance of mind and habits, an intelligence so acute, a sensibility so lively—for what, beloved girl, in this dread and unknown region art thou reserved? O may'st thou die, this very hour, a spotless angel in these arms! die—and be lost to thy disconsolate mother for ever, rather than become the prey of remorseless savages—the victim of implacable brutality!"

These soul-harrowing apprehensions were succeeded by others less horrible, perhaps, in some respects, but possessing their full share of misery. What means had Lady Earlingford, should her companion be restored to animation, of preserving her existence? When, with looks of irresistible supplication, those eyes, now equally excluding the light of day, and the view of their desolate situation, should fix themselves on her's, imploring sustenance and succour, what had she to bestow upon the idolized pleader, but tears, sighs, and unavailing

lamentations!—"And must she die the lingering death of famine! Can I bear to see her convulsively expiring at my feet!—Oh, Father of Mercy, avert from her so fearful an end! Give me enterprize and intelligence to save her at least from this intolerable evil!"

As she uttered these words, gently depositing her lovely burthen on the long thin grass with which that part of the beach was sparingly scattered, and starting up with renewed vigour, Lady Earlingford advanced towards a grove of trees forming the back-ground of the spot on which she had been reposing. As she proceeded, endeavouring, however, constantly to keep her precious charge in view, the grass became more luxuriant, and the sandy consistence of the soil improved into earth capable of the highest cultivation. At length she descried a clear and fertilizing brook, calmly winding along amongst tufts of shrubs, clustering so thickly together as nearly to conceal its unruffled surface. Its banks were also abundantly provided with various descriptions of herbage, from amidst which Lady Earlingford selected a species

of water cresses, which on trial she found so palatable, that no doubt remained to her of its salubrious qualities. Furnishing herself therefore with an ample portion of it, she next turned her attention to the means of conveying to her daughter a draught from the refreshing stream. Nothing immediately presented itself: but indefatigable in her researches, she was so fortunate in the end as to discover a large calabash, or gourd, which, split by the ardent rays of the sun, appeared perfectly adapted to the office it was intended to perform. When filled, the affectionate mother hastened with it, and the herbs which she had collected, to her still insensible child. The cooling beverage, when applied to Viola's parched lips, startled, and in a few minutes appeared to revive her: she half unclosed her eyes; a tremulous sigh heaved her bosom; and though she as yet made no attempt to speak, such direful images seemed, with returning consciousness, to rush into her memory, that shuddering, and letting her face fall upon her two hands, she burst into a flood of tears. The proffered food she gently rejected; but after awhile, in a murmur

scarcely audible, asked again for water. Lady Earlingford, watching all her movements with intense anxiety, gratified the wish as soon as uttered, and Viola having appeased the burning thirst that devoured her, looked mournfully around—then gazed at herself,—cast a timid glance towards the ocean, and at last fearfully said: "My mother—my most dear mother! On what unknown shore have we been cast? How came we here?—And how, oh Heaven! can you endure the sight of an element which has wrought us so much evil!"

"Its fury pursues us not here, my beloved girl! The contention is over; all immediate peril is past, and the merciful Protector who suffered us to outlive the dangers of the late awful night, will extend to us his guardianship, and provide for our existence here!"

"Where then are we, my mother?"

"In a spot which, to judge by what I have hitherto been enabled to see of it, appears fertile, and promises us the blessings of a mild temperature, and of unmolested security."

"And are we," demanded Viola, in an

accent of heart-piercing consternation, "are we the only beings who survived the storm?"

"It is possible we are *not:* but of that I am yet in utter ignorance."

"You have seen no one, then? Heard no voice since the dreadful cries of the drowning wretches in the vessel penetrated our hearts with unavailing but agonizing compassion!—Oh, those cries! they still vibrate in my ears! they pursue—they almost drive me frantic!"

As she spoke, she buried her face in her mother's bosom, and clung to her with all the vehemence of one agitated by uncontroulable terror. Lady Earlingford soothed, and endeavoured to inspire her with more fortitude: but it was long ere the arguments she used produced the effect of calming the anguish of her daughter's mind. Wrung with pity for those who had perished, she enumerated in succession their names; mourned over their fate; dwelt upon their merits; bewailed the sufferings of their kindred, and often exclaimed: "Why, why should *I* have been rescued, and so many better beings—so many

whose lives were of such infinitely greater value—why should *they* have been sacrificed!"

A gloomy pause ensued: but presently, raising her head with an air of solemn and indescribable emotion: "We are now then estranged from the rest of the creation! No human eye will ever rest upon us again! No voices save our own ever strike upon our ears! We are outcasts—we are aliens from all our species—and one of us may die, and the other—Oh, 'tis too, too dreadful!" She flung herself upon the earth, overcome by the horror of this anticipation, and cries of mingled grief and distraction burst from her bosom. Lady Earlingford, in deep distress, besought her to be more composed: "The despair to which you are giving way," cried she, "is cruel! It aggravates all my own sufferings. O, my dear child, surmount this frenzy of impatience! Be submissive to the decrees of Providence, and thus render yourself worthy of a gentler fate. For you, chiefly, do I lament our banishment; for you, and," she added, sighing, "your vainly expecting, and, ere long, deeply sorrowing father!"

At these words, Viola roused herself: "Alas, alas! my poor unconscious father! What a stroke will this be to his affectionate heart! But tell me, my dearest mother, do you think that we are indeed here—*for life!* Can a fate so very dreadful, so deplorably gloomy really await us! Oh, God of pity," continued she, sinking upon her knees, and passionately raising her eyes and clasped hands to Heaven, "impute not to me as a crime these tears, these involuntary repinings! Weak, helpless, stricken as I am, I scarcely can be deemed responsible for any thing I say: my mind is all a chaos; I have but one clear perception left—a sense of misery greater than I can bear!"

It was many hours ere Lady Earlingford had the consolation of seeing any abatement in the bitterness of her daughter's feelings. One moment, stretched upon the ground, invoking death to release her from a state of such hopeless wretchedness; the next, silent, immovable, wrapt in gloomy meditation, she looked as if sorrow had turned her into stone; and deaf, for the

first time, to the voice of maternal affection, an air of torpid insensibility diffused itself over her countenance that seemed the forerunner of utter alienation of mind. Lady Earlingford trembled at the menaced evil. In the tenderest language, she adjured her child to take pity on her breaking heart; she folded her in her arms; wept over her, and lavished upon her every endearing epithet a parent's fondness could suggest. "Whilst thou art spared to me," she cried, "life may be supportable, even in this dreary desert! Thou art my all! My senses, my existence hang upon thine. Oh, look up, my Viola! Be a comfort to me! Banish from thy heart this unnatural apathy! Unite with me in supplications to the Almighty, that we may not be torn asunder; that, protected by his clemency whilst together, we may at the same instant breathe forth our expiring sigh!"

These were the first words which appeared to make upon the desponding girl the slightest impression: "Amen, amen!" she fervently ejaculated. Lady Earlingford embraced her, and resuming the same strain

of discourse, obtained, gradually, the unspeakable satisfaction of witnessing her restoration to some degree of calmness.

The day was now far advanced, and the fond mother, eager to provide support for her child of a more nourishing kind than the vegetables which she had at first brought to her, yet unwilling to wander far from her side, at length prevailed upon her to accompany, and assist her in the search: "But first," she cried, "let us revisit the place where we were drifted to shore. I faintly recollect, I think, having perceived floating near us some object resembling a chest or trunk; and should we be so happy as to find my surmise realized, we may become possessed of many comforts unattainable by any other means. Lean upon me, my Viola, and let us proceed to examine what we may now well consider as our only hope of temporal assistance."

Shattered and enfeebled, Viola slowly arose: the sun had long since dried her garments and her hair, and shone with a lustre that gave beauty to the lonely scene: but nothing could impart comfort to her dejected spirit. She seldom raised her eyes

from the ground; or if, for a moment, she mechanically looked up, the objects around her seemed to renew all her anguish, and tears in large drops coursed each other down her colourless cheeks. Lady Earlingford affected not to perceive these fresh tokens of sadness; but observing, with thankfulness and pleasure, a great variety of shell-fish scattered upon the beach, she tried to tempt her to taste some of the food thus bountifully proffered to their necessities. Viola, however, turned away with feelings of disgust which she had not yet learnt to conquer: "I am still," said she, "too new in the school of adversity to raise to my lips such crude and unprepared nourishment. Do not press it upon me, my dear mother; when the cravings of hunger become intolerable, you are very sure that this fastidiousness must give way."

Lady Earlingford said no more; and, presently, having reached the spot where they landed, she beheld, almost beyond her expectations, the chest to which she had alluded, drying upon the sands.

On approaching still nearer to this vehicle of expected benefit, it was discovered

to have appertained to her nephew, a youth who had sailed as a cadet in the same vessel with her, and, only a few hours previous to the storm, had obtained leave to go on board one of the other Indiamen on a visit to some of its officers. Taking with him merely a few immediate necessaries, his chest had remained on board the vessel to which he belonged; and being now, with much difficulty, forced open, proved to contain many articles, which, to persons in their destitute condition, were of the highest importance. Amongst a considerable quantity of linen, there was a bale of cloth intended for uniforms to be made up after the young man's arrival in India; a musket, and a number of gun-flints; an ample supply of shoes; several pounds of wax lights; a small case of instruments; a few books in the English, French, Persian, and Moorish languages; a little assortment of knives, scissars, needles, and thread; and a complete suit of male attire. These, with some other effects of less value, amongst which was unexpectedly discovered a small saw, and a large provision of stationery, completed the riches thus providentially disco-

vered. Lady Earlingford, at sight of such acquisitions, was really transported; she considered them as pledges of divine mercy; and felt a sort of prophetic conviction that, if gratefully and worthily received, these benefits would be followed by others equally precious, and equally unexpected: "We are not abandoned by our Heavenly Father!" cried she. "He deals with us benevolently, even in this hour of tribulation. Take comfort, my poor girl! Put your trust in his goodness; and sooth yourself, as I do, with the firm belief, that we are here only for a season, here only for a short time of probation!"

Viola pressed her mother's hand, but unable to participate in the animation of her feelings, remained silent.

Grown eager to secure her new property from the risk of future mischief, her first care, after depositing upon the shore the heaviest of its contents, was, to drag the chest out of reach of the returning tide. This effected, she struck, by means of one of the gun-flints and the blade of a clasp knife, a few sparks over a little heap of dry leaves, which, quickly kindling, a flame

was produced, which being fed by withered boughs, in a very short time expanded into an excellent fire. Over this, she prepared their shell fish, which, with a portion of the cresses already gathered, and a draught from the pure mountain stream, completed the first repast upon their new residence of the desolate pair.

Invigorated in body, if not cheered in mind, by the nourishment of which she had partaken, Viola made no opposition to her mother's wish of exploring the inland parts of their hitherto secure and peaceful little territory; and marking well the surrounding objects, that they might not, on their return, mistake the spot where the chest remained, they set out on their reconnoitring expedition.

CHAP. II.

In solitude,
What happiness? Who can enjoy alone,
Or all enjoying, what contentment find?

MILTON.

Oh for a voice
Of comfort...for a ray of hope from Heaven!

SOUTHEY.

SPEEDILY after they had quitted the beach, the country began, though gradually, yet very perceptibly, to rise. The woods became thicker, and an infinitely greater variety of trees, shrubs, and plants, presented themselves. Many of these were such as Lady Earlingford had not the remotest acquaintance with; but some she discovered whose names and nutritious properties she was perfectly aware of; amongst them was the sugar cane, growing wild, in small bushes; the plantain, distinguished by its tuft of broad, light green leaves, and wholesome farinaceous fruit; the banyan tree, itself a grove; the mango, and the

refreshing tamarind. Further on, along the margin of the rivulet, whose course they were determined, as long as it was possible, to pursue, they discerned large patches of a sort of plant resembling spinnage, not unpleasant to the palate even raw. Cocoa trees in groves, limes, and a multitude of lofty trees of the palm kind, nearly concluded the list of botanical productions of which Lady Earlingford had any previous knowledge; but these, all grateful and salubrious, were a feast to her eyes which awakened the most thankful emotions. Yet more to charm the senses, the sequestered shades through which they wandered were peopled by innumerable birds, many of which had nothing but the brilliancy of their plumage to recommend them; whilst others, such as the Bengal bird, the yellow-crowned thrush, and some whose shyness allowed them not to appear, animated and cheered the groves by the sweetness of their song.

Lady Earlingford often suspended her progress, and gazed around with the liveliest admiration. Viola once, meeting her eye, which seemed to ask—"Are there no charms

here that may still give value to life?" shook her head and said; "Here are indeed ample means of prolonging life,—but where is the interest that can render life a blessing!"

"Still so desponding, my dearest child?"

"Oh, worse—far worse than desponding! I am ungrateful—I fear even sinfully ungrateful! The light of heaven is odious to me; and all the advantages which endear existence in a state of society, such as youth, health, security, and abundance, I now consider as subjects of the most bitter regret, since henceforward they can serve no other purpose than that of lengthening out the joyless and desolate career to which I seem condemned. Think me not impious—I presume not to prescribe to the Almighty: but, had it pleased Him to leave us one gleam of hope by which we might have been cheered—might have been encouraged to flatter ourselves that, at some future day, this fearful exile would terminate, I could have borne it, I am sure I could—with constancy and resolution. But, *for ever!*—banished for ever, and in the very morn of life, from father, country, friends!—To be

dead to the world, yet still to maintain a miserable existence upon its surface! To wander, perhaps for years, amidst these rocks, in solitude, in silence, in utter hopelessness! Oh, my mother! these are inflictions which admit of so little alleviation from the circumstance of climate, of outward beauty, or fertility, that, were this spot a paradise, isolated as it is, I should deem myself the most pitiable of human creatures in being sentenced to inhabit it!"

"And can you believe, my dearest child," cried Lady Earlingford, "that I contemplate your fate with at all less compassion? Oh, no! I am conscious that, at your age, a reverse such as this must be terrible. To me, it is far from being equally cruel. I have tried the attractions of the world: I have long enjoyed the best advantages which it has to bestow: I have had friends: I have possessed the affection of an honourable husband, and participated in the public consideration which his high character so deservedly obtained. I regret these blessings, no doubt: yet, having fully tasted them, my imagination is at rest, and lends to them none of the fascinations

which, to your youthful and sanguine mind, they must naturally wear. Could I therefore but see you more resigned, I might, even here, call myself happy; since, of all the feelings I have experienced during a life of nearly unclouded prosperity, none ever satisfied my heart, none ever appeared to me so delicious, as those which I am still blessed with the power of indulging—the feelings of a mother!"

Viola, deeply affected by this tender language, threw herself into her mother's arms; and the gentlest tears which she had yet shed, flowed from her eyes. Lady Earlingford fondly returned her embrace, and thus went on: "In what I have hitherto said, I have adverted only to my own sources of consolation. Let me now state the motives, my dear girl, which should induce *you* to subdue this overwhelming consternation. How far we were driven by the storm from the direct tract to India I cannot pretend to ascertain; but what has happened to us, may, with consequences less fearful, happen to others. European ships may again be diverted from their course; may again approach this little island; yet, outliving the tempest which

impels them, may anchor in security, may discover our desolate situation, afford us succour, and convey us back to all we love, and all that we appear to have irremediably lost. These, my dear Viola, are the thoughts that I would have you cherish; and when their influence has appeased the acuteness of your present sorrow—when, with recovered energy, you can indeed calmly contemplate even the worst aspect of our affairs, you will learn to wonder how you could, though but for a moment, distrust the power and mercy of that gracious Being, by whom you have so lately, and so signally been preserved."

Viola was at an age, when gloomy impressions, however strong, are seldom indelible. She clung to the cheering suggestions her mother presented to her: she promised to repress her murmurs; to make it the sole study of her life to repay the thousand proofs of maternal love which, from her birth, had been lavished upon her; and these assurances, heard with delight, contributed to fortify Lady Earlingford's courage, and to animate all her powers of exertion.

Though their progress had been slow during the preceding dialogue, another quarter of an hour brought them to a spot, about one-third of the ascent up the mountain, the elevation and beauty of which induced them to pause. Above them the rocks appeared bare, rugged, and inaccessible: but on the narrow yet verdant platform to which they had leisurely and insensibly climbed, they found a secure resting-place, and gladly reposed whilst regaling their sight with a survey of the thousand natural charms so abundantly bestowed upon the unknown, or neglected little gem of which they were become the admiring, and, apparently, the sole—the involuntary sovereigns! Between two masses of stone, richly overhung on either side by woods of every tint, form, and dimensions, flowed a limpid brook; whose course, after having been impeded by intervening crags, over which it dashed with turbulence and impetuosity, at length found a smoother channel, and ran calm, polished, and clear as the brightest crystal. The two wanderers could hear it, as they sat, falling from precipice to precipice with a sound at

once vehement, refreshing, and monotonous. Thick clumps of odoriferous orange trees, mingled with tamarinds and palmettos, waved over their heads; and, full in front of their green and lofty retreat, appeared the ocean in boundless and now unruffled majesty, reflecting the beams of a cloudless sun.

Viola turned her eyes from the sight: "So placid now," she internally cried,— "and yesterday so fatally outrageous! Thou art content, then, with the victims thou hast ingulfed; and smil'st, as in ruthless triumph, at thy mightiness to destroy!"

A deep sigh, proceeding from an aching heart, which she dreaded again to afflict her mother by unburthening, followed this mental exclamation. To conceal the tears which had rushed to her eyes, she arose as if to examine a singular shrub starting from a crevice in the rock at a few paces distance; whilst Lady Earlingford, still engaged in contemplating the novel beauties of the scene, remained, during some minutes, unconscious of her removal: but when she missed her from her side---turned, and saw not the form dearer to her eyes than the

light of heaven, a moment of the most pungent agony extorted from her a cry that thrilled to the soul of her affrighted child, and brought her, with panting eagerness, to know whence an exclamation of such terror had originated.

Pale as death, and trembling in every joint, yet forcing a tearful smile, Lady Earlingford, as she pressed her daughter's hand, said: "See, my dear Viola, whether thy poor mother has any pretence to accuse thee of weakness—to arraign thee for want of self-command! The circumstance of merely losing sight of thee for a few fearful seconds, has reduced her to the tottering feebleness of an infant! Leave me not again, beloved girl—leave me not again, I implore thee! This single experiment, brief as it has been, suffices to convince me, that, were I, by any unexplained cause, deprived but for an interval of thy presence, neither my intellects, nor, perhaps, my life, could withstand the shock!"

Viola, heart-struck and dismayed, hung round her agitated parent, soothing and cheering her; and, by a thousand tender promises, seeking to dispel the emotion

which she had so unintentionally excited. When assured that she had in a great measure succeeded—"Will you not, my dearest mother," she cried, "the more readily pardon this little transgression in your child, when you learn that her transient absence has effected a discovery which secures to us the very benefit of which we were most in need? Behind those bending shrubs, and partly concealed by that jutting crag, is a cave, my dear mother, dry, spacious, and impenetrable to the vicissitudes of the weather. In wet or cold, in wind or heat, *there* we shall be equally fenced from the elements; and it appeared to me, as far as I was able to judge on so short an inspection, divided into two compartments, forming an inner and an outward recess, the one adapted to our accommodation by day; the other, warmer, and less exposed to the dews of night. Come and view it: I am sure you will bless the impulse which guided me to the detection of so welcome a place of refuge."

Charmed by such a description, Lady Earlingford arose in haste to examine, with her daughter, this newly-announced asy-

lum. She found it, in every respect, such as Viola had represented; and, like all things valuable of attainment, whether in the moral or the physical world, found it veiled from observation, unobtrusive, and not to be won without some trouble.

The sun had not yet completed more than half his course, and allowed them ample time, whilst still it was above the horizon, to make such a disposition of the effects discovered in the chest, as should secure to them a night of comparative luxury, beneath the shelter of their sequestered retreat. The chest itself they were compelled to leave upon the beach; its weight being greater than they now felt themselves equal to remove: but in two journeys they conveyed to their sylvan grot all the property with which it had been furnished, and found no small degree of interest in disposing these objects around the cave in the most convenient order. Having completed these, not unpleasant labours, and perceiving that the day was drawing to a close, Lady Earlingford and her daughter selected, from the variety that presented itself on every side, some fruit for

their evening repast; and then, commending themselves in fervent prayer to their sole—their Heavenly Guardian, they sunk to sleep upon a bed of leaves, each clasping a hand of the other in her own, and rested securely till the break of day.

The morning, though it found the unhappy outcasts much recruited by the unmolested repose which they had enjoyed, brought with it a renewal of that solemn sense of desolation, which for some hours had been suspended and forgotten. Viola's first indication of returning consciousness was a deep-drawn and heart-rending sigh: her mother heard, and involuntarily echoed it. They embraced with tender, though sad emotion; yet, actuated by the same sentiment of gratitude, as they gazed around their faintly-illumined cell, they spontaneously offered up their thanks for the security they had experienced; and, shortly after, repaired, arm in arm, their eyes moistened, but not overflowing, to the wild shrubbery adorning the sort of terrace at the entrance of their cave.

The morning was clear and serene as the evening of the preceding day: the few musi-

cal birds on the island were hailing the first rays of the sun with instinctive rapture; the vegetable creation, refreshed and verdant, sparkling with dew, and diffusing fragrance around, looked more gay and lovely than in Viola's eyes it had ever done in any other region. She and her mother seated themselves on the spot where they had sought repose the day before, and for nearly an hour calmly conversed on the subject of their future mode of life—the disposal of their time, and the wisest and most frugal uses to which their European property might be applied. This discussion over,—in which both sought not only to evince, but to feel greater interest than it was yet capable of exciting in the breast of either,—they partook of such nourishment as with the least trouble was within their reach; and then, with virtuous emulation, proceeded to employ themselves in taking a more accurate survey of their stores; in setting aside whatever might be required for immediate accommodation; and in making a more compact arrangement of the remainder.

Towards noon, they desisted from these sedentary avocations, and descended to the

beach to ascertain the state of the tide, and if it was favourable, to gather upon the sands the moderate portion of animal food their appetite required. The waves were already gently rippling back to the shore: but they were yet in time to effect their purpose; and as Viola, inclining forward, intent upon her employment, walked with her eyes fixed on the ground, she was struck, in defiance of the dejected state of mind which rendered her nearly indifferent to outward objects, by the beauty of form, colour, and design of the innumerable shells that lay scattered in her path. The time *had* been, when an exhibition so admirable would have been contemplated by her with rapture. Highly cultivated, few of the studies connected with the system of female improvement adopted in modern times, had been neglected through the progress of her education. She understood something of conchology, and had possessed, amongst other curiosities, a little cabinet of shells, which it had been her delight to class, arrange, and, at every opportunity, to enlarge. How inestimable would the lovely specimens now before her have appeared

at that happy period! What were they at the present moment?—Futile and insignificant. She cast upon them a slight and almost unconscious glance, and then passed on, surprised that she could have been attracted by them at all.

Their temperate meal concluded, the mother and daughter dedicated the remainder of the day to a ramble round the base of the mountain, in order to gain some knowledge of the extent of the isle; and also from the secret wish, on Lady Earlingford's part, of becoming thoroughly assured that they had nothing to apprehend from the ferocity of any, hitherto undescried, inhabitants. So prepossessed had Viola been, from the first moment she recovered her senses on reaching the island, that they had been drifted upon an absolutely unpeopled shore, that the dread of encountering the slightest molestation from a native never presented itself to her imagination; whilst, on the contrary, the terror of this greatest of all evils, was scarcely for an instant banished from the bosom of her mother. Happily, no indications presented themselves in the progress of their expedition

calculated to confirm these natural, yet harassing, fears. From the elevated spots to which they occasionally ascended, they could command the whole extent of low land between the mountain and the sea. Neither hut, nor other vestige of human residence appeared; all was silent, untenanted—flourishing, yet uncultured—awful from its solitude, yet beautiful from its verdure. The immense trees, which, mixed with those of humbler dimensions, at once gave variety and magnificence to the landscape, seemed coeval with creation; the turf bore no impression of the progress of any living creature across it; there was nothing in any part of the prospect to remind the insulated pair of the fellow-beings with whom they had once associated: they could almost have fancied themselves the only survivors on earth after a general wreck of the human species.

"Ah, my dear mother," cried Viola, "will the time ever arrive when, ceasing to regret so acutely former connexions, and former blessings, we shall learn to contemplate our present state without dismay and aversion? Will this place ever become to-

lerable to us? Will the *heart* ever participate in the approbation which it irresistibly extorts from the *eye?* Is the mind pliant enough to reconcile itself to a change so tremendous?"

"Experience alone," replied Lady Earlingford, "can teach us what custom and sad necessity may effect. There is a story upon record of a state prisoner detained so long in durance, that when his dungeon was at length thrown open, he refused to quit it. Amongst the popular proverbs, consecrated as 'the wisdom of nations,' there is one favourable to our case: *Habit is second nature.*"

"True," resumed Viola, "and to this mechanical and tedious process must I look for my only hope, I fear, of uncomplaining endurance. It is not merely impatience, it is terror at a state of such utter desolation that irritates my sufferings. Had I been a man, dear mother, my firmer nerves would have enabled me to bear it better. The higher degree of energy and fortitude attached to the male character would surely have divested this wilderness of much of its dread solemnity."

"I question whether it would. The nature of man is, in a peculiar degree, restless and ambitious; his aim is distinction; his prerogative authority; his province exertion. Would the ardour of a truly masculine spirit contentedly support the inactive, unvarying, tenour of a life such as this? No; nor, to say the truth, should I much honour the disposition which could unmurmuringly accommodate itself, in the vigour of every faculty, to an existence so obscure—so exempt from all purpose of utility. Women, my dear Viola, are not only more formed for retirement, but they know how to yield to circumstances with more grace, to submit to adversity with more composure than their turbulent coadjutors. Women are timid, yet they resist despair; they shun all active contest, but their fortitude, though passive, is steady. Sudden danger appals them; but sufferings, privations, disappointments, sorrows—women can bear all these, and even display greatness of mind in bearing them; whilst men sink under such tame calamities, and degenerate into helpless and peevish repiners."

"You have convinced me," said Viola,

faintly smiling, " that few heroes would make good hermits: but, alas! my own feelings convince me also, that it is very possible to make a bad hermit without possessing one of the requisites that would constitute a hero!"

In discourse such as this, the hours elapsed, and evening was fast approaching, when Lady Earlingford judged it prudent to direct her steps towards the retreat which they now regarded as their home. In the progress of this day's perigrination, with all the diligence which they could exert, it did not appear to either mother or daughter that they had encompassed more than one-third of the circle round the mountain. In many places they had been impeded by the inequalities of the ground they had to traverse; by the intervention of abruptly projecting rocks; the closely entangled underwood which grew beneath the forest-trees; or the sudden interruption of a deep though narrow torrent which they could only cross by taking a circuitous route in search of its most fordable passage.

On reaching their rustic abode, where

every thing remained as when they had left it, they concluded the day as they had begun it, with prayers and supplications, and too weary for further conversation, betook themselves to rest.

CHAP. III.

Ah! region of delight! could ought be found,
To sooth awhile the tortured bosom's pain,
Of sorrow's rankling shaft to cure the wound,
And bring life's first delusions once again,
'Twere surely met in thee!—thy prospect fair,
Thy wood-notes wild, thy clear and balmy air,
Have power to sooth all sadness—but despair.

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

THE succeeding, and many following days, passed nearly in the same manner, unmarked by any incident of greater importance than, perhaps, the discovery of some new plant, adapted to the purposes of food; the view, in some of their long wanderings, of a peculiarly romantic spot, or the accidental detection of the varied uses to which the abundant vegetable produce around them might be applied. From the cocoa-nut, whose hard rind Lady Earlingford and Viola had learnt very dexterously to divide, they soon became aware, that an oil might be extracted without great

labour, capable of feeding any kind of rude lamp which, from the deep shells on the shore, they should succeed in contriving. To the calabash, the first serviceable object which they had discovered, their subsequent obligations were endless. Its thin, and close-grained shell, as they had often read is the case in the West Indies, and on the continent of Africa, afforded to them a substitute for almost every domestic vessel they could require; and, still to enhance its value, might, they soon found, be appropriated even to the purpose of boiling water, being of a texture so singularly compact, as to bear the action of fire several succeeding times without being injured. From the leaves of the cocoa tree, and the pliant twigs of the bamboo, Viola taught herself the art of constructing little baskets, useful for containing fruit, and still more useful as affording their ingenious manufactress the means of filling up some portion of the time which too often hung most heavily on her hands. By degrees, she became expert in such a variety of ways, and looked so much less unhappy when employed, that Lady Earlingford intentionally devised

a thousand little experiments for the secret purpose of stimulating her to continual activity. When evening arrived, they allowed themselves the indulgence of recurring to their limitted, but precious library. The works of which it principally consisted were first, a Bible and Prayer-book; then, Milton's Paradise Lost, Shakespear's Plays, bound in a single volume; a broken set of Plutarch's Lives; Anson's and Cooke's Voyages, and two or three other authors, upon subjects less generally interesting, but more scientific. Most of those above enumerated, were of a description, though often read before, to be read for ever without satiety or languor; and Viola, always passionately fond of books, and now, deprived of every other recreation, pursued her lectures with an avidity so intense, that whilst thus engaged, every fear, every regret, every circumstance connected with her present position, vanished from her remembrance, and she hoped or desponded, wept or exulted in sympathy with the supposed feelings of which she read, and in happy oblivion of all that related to self.

To these alternate efforts of industry, and

gratifications of intellect, Viola, ere long, added another solace, which, however simple, she was in no predicament to disdain. The birds so numerously dispersed throughout the island, unused to human treachery or violence, and therefore divested of nearly every species of apprehension, improved the intimacy which they had been gradually making advances towards contracting with her, till many of them became so confiding, that they voluntarily fed from her hand, stationed themselves upon her shoulders, and accompanied her wherever she went, or surrendered themselves her willing guests at night, and roosted upon the bamboo perches which she prepared for them within the cave. It was pleasant to meet with any objects she could love; and nearly the first symptom of a smile which Lady Earlingford beheld and joyfully hailed on the face of her dejected daughter, was drawn forth by the amusing familiarity of these unsuspicious little associates. To some, of whose names she was ignorant, Viola assigned appellations indicative of their dispositions. One tribe she called the *courtier birds;* another, the *plotters;* and

those in highest favour, she denominated the *social birds:* these last were the only ones who ever ventured within the grot; and so perfectly fearless and domestic were they become, and such, in various instances, was the intelligence and attachment which they displayed, that a more misanthropic observer might have been tempted to prefer them to many of their consequential biped brethren of the human species.

The solitary pair had now been residents somewhat more than three weeks in their Indian desert; all turbulence of grief had subsided: even Viola, though far from being restored to her naturally gay frame of mind, was, at intervals, capable of conversing with some animation. She one evening, the most deliciously temperate of any which they had yet experienced, solicited her mother to accompany her on a favourite walk, leading to a recess amongst the rocks about half a mile from their cell, whence a prospect of such picturesque beauty might be discerned, that it was become with her a resort the most attractive upon the island: "We will take our dear Shakespear with us," said she, "and when we have reached

my pleasant haunt, I will read to you some of the scenes of his ever-interesting Tempest—scenes rendered to me now inexhaustibly attaching by the coincidence with our own circumstances which they so often bear; by the impulse they give to my almost paralyzed fancy, and the cheering images which they enable me to call together."

"Do you, then," said Lady Earlingford, as they sallied forth on their expedition, "do you picture to yourself, with the aid of this all-powerful magician, Fancy, the etherial and delicate Ariel, bending submissively before his 'Great master;' flying to do his 'hests;—sailing in the clouds, or skimming o'er the deep? Do you hear his voice in the wind, or listen to his music along the shore?"

"Almost, my dear mother! And almost I could weep with Ferdinand at the Spirit's poetical description of the transformation undergone by the poor Prince's father; I could half persuade myself that I see the disconsolate wanderer; 'his arms in this sad knot,' pacing the beach, and starting at the sounds which cruelly, because falsely, inform him, he no longer has a parent."

"And, by the same force of imagination," said Lady Earlingford, a little archly, "do you never identify yourself with Miranda, and, in fancy, perform the part of comforter to the poor Prince?"

"Ah, no. I should grieve now at the association to our banishment of any male companion. You have taught me to believe, that a man, thus exiled, would be so irremediably unhappy, so disgusted, and so unceasingly repining, that, not even in my most visionary moments, do I ever admit one into my romance. No: we will have no murmuring Ferdinands here, 'cooling the air with sighs:' we can, alas! furnish sighs enough of our own!"

On their arrival at their destined resting-place, Viola, more than ever struck by the bright aspect of every surrounding object, glowing in the rays of the evening sun, forgot her meditated lecture, satisfied with the pleasure of contemplating the charms of a spot she had never till now seen at so advantageous a moment. Lady Earlingford, silently participating in her feelings, sat placidly beside her; now surveying the lifeless, though beautiful features of the

landscape; now, with still greater interest, gazing on the expressive face of her child.

Suddenly these peaceful enjoyments were interrupted. Lady Earlingford, precipitately rising, darted towards a thicket, a few paces from them, and there became engaged in eager and even terrified search of some object which she fancied had, the moment before, whizzed through the air, and fallen in that direction. Viola's head was turned a contrary way, and she had not observed any peculiar appearance, nor attended to the sound by which her mother had been alarmed: but, whilst the latter was still continuing her anxious scrutiny, the compassionate and startled girl beheld a bird, about the size of a pheasant, drop, fluttering and helpless, at her feet. She had no time to examine its condition, or to attempt giving it any relief; for, just as she was bending over it, Lady Earlingford, with a complexion blanched by terror, and lips that quivered as she spoke, rejoined her, and, in a low and hurried accent, said: "Viola, we must instantly retreat from hence:—ask no questions; but follow me with all the speed you can exert."

Scared and shaking, though she knew not wherefore, Viola seized her mother's arm, and prepared for flight; yet, ere she went, casting a pitying glance towards the panting bird, and, reluctant to leave it in so deplorable a state, she snatched it up, and then accompanied Lady Earlingford in mute consternation, along the steep and broken path that led towards the cell.

The origin of all this speed and dismay was, in truth, of no trivial nature, and fully justified Lady Earlingford's utmost alarm. In the brake which, hearing it rustle, and beholding it struck by some falling body, she had so scrupulously examined, an arrow had met her sight, constructed exactly like those used, as she had heard, by the Indians; and the bird, disabled and wounded, which Viola had picked up, she doubted not was the object against which the arrow had been aimed. This discovery convinced her at once, that the island, though she and her daughter had so long escaped all molestation, was, in reality, inhabited; and revived, in greater force than ever, all the timidity and undefined dread which an interval of such uninterrupted security had

contributed to dispel. Yet silencing her but too reasonable fears, this tender mother, during their rapid return to the cave, employed her mind nearly as solicitously in devising the means of averting from her child the infection of her dismay, as in meditating upon the painful circumstance which had given it birth. Once or twice, when Viola, burning with curiosity, attempted in a whisper to entreat an explanation, Lady Earlingford, unprepared with any reply, placed her finger on her lips to enjoin caution and forbearance; and the wondering girl, too docile to infringe a command even thus perplexingly signified, suppressed her impatience, and submitted, without a complaint, to the prolonged suspense which she was condemned to endure.

But when once more within the precincts of their grot, giving scope to her feelings, she poured upon her mother a succession of questions the most eager and the most voluble: "Some hideous appearance," she cried, "must have encountered your sight in that mysterious thicket. It is no frivolous cause that could thus shake your steady spirit! Speak, dearest mother;—

what did you discover? Are there venomous reptiles on the island, or animals of prey?"

Unused to every species of fabrication, Lady Earlingford, who had vainly tasked her imagination to furnish her with any credible motive for what had passed, availed herself most gladly of the one thus unexpectedly afforded her. She permitted the suggestion started by her daughter to remain uncontradicted; and Viola, predisposed to be deceived, was too much engaged in filling up the out-line of the case which she had herself invented, to be very quick-sighted to her mother's embarrassment.

"I comprehend now," said she, "the way in which this poor bird has been injured. It probably was attacked by the ferocious creature, whatever it was, which occasioned you so much trepidation, and had sagacity enough to repair to us for preservation from inevitable death. Poor little harmless thing! how I love it for its trust in our p ty! But its wing, I fear, is broken; and it seems hardly able to raise its languid eye-lid! My dear mother, will you not assist me in trying to do something for it?"

Lady Earlingford was but ill disposed at that moment to give directions how to perform the part of surgeon to a wounded bird: but, rather than disappoint her compassionate child, she was beginning to recommend some expedient for its relief, when the poor creature fell on its side, and, after a faint struggle, expired in Viola's lap. At this sight, turning pale, and shuddering, she gazed on it many minutes in silent consternation; and then, placing her hands before her face, as if to hide her emotion, she mournfully said: "Ah, dearest mother!—the sight of death—even the death of a poor bird—what hideous ideas, in this lonely scene, does it awaken! The day must come when one of *us* shall thus perish in full view of the other! Oh, my mother! think, think what will then be the despair, —the unmitigated agony of the miserable survivor!"

Already depressed by her own secret inquietude, Lady Earlingford was quite overcome by this gloomy, and but too natural reflection! She threw herself upon the ground beside her daughter, and folding her in her arms, wept upon her shoulder a

flood of the bitterest tears which ever yet she had shed. Viola lamented having touched so disastrous a theme: yet such were the dismal thoughts impressed upon her imagination by the incident she had just witnessed, that she had scarcely power for some time to exert herself for the revival of her distressed fellow-outcast. By degrees, both regained more composure: and Lady Earlingford, accusing herself of weakness, arose, kissed her daughter's forehead, exhorted her to struggle against such mournful anticipations;—and then, pacing up and down their spacious cavern, she revolved in silence the safest and best method of investigating the subject of her recent alarm.

A ray of consolation sometimes beamed upon her, when the possibility suggested itself, that the arrow, the instrument of so much disturbance to her, might not, after all, have been launched by any actual resident upon the island, but by some Indian passing near it in his canoe. The spot where it fell was by no means so distant from the sea as to render such a circumstance improbable;—or, at all events, the archer

might be only an accidental sportsman, attracted by the number of birds in their woods, or the profusion of fish upon their shores. He might land a few hours, and then re-embark for his accustomed abode. That he had been unaccompanied, the perfect stillness of the place, unbroken by any sound of human voices, seemed strongly to testify. Clinging then to the hope that this personage, whencesoever he might come, would prove a visitor as transient as he was undesired, Lady Earlingford summoning all her fortitude, determined, as soon as Viola should be asleep, to avail herself of the brilliant light afforded by a full unclouded moon, in order to revisit the scene of her late terror. It was to be conjectured that the stranger, in searching for the game which he had struck down, would lose no time in repairing to the recess: and there was one circumstance which inclined her to believe that she could convince herself of the fact beyond all possibility of doubt. Viola had forgotten, at the moment of their hasty flight, to secure her highly-valued Shakespear. Should any one have explored the spot after their depar-

ture, it was not to be questioned that this book, lying in a conspicuous position, would either have been permanently appropriated, or at least examined, and removed from the rocky seat on which it had been deposited. It could perhaps answer no very useful purpose to seek satisfaction too minutely upon this point: but so disquieted were the feelings of Lady Earlingford, that she could not rest without attempting to gain some sort of certainty; and this being the only step immediately in her power, she fixed upon it in preference to remaining totally inactive.

At the accustomed time, Viola, still sad at heart, repaired to rest. Her mother watched beside her nearly an hour; and then, perceiving that there was no risk of her suddenly awaking, she cautiously arose, called down a blessing upon her head, and sallied forth on her lonely nocturnal expedition.

CHAP. IV.

How beautiful is night!
A dewy freshness fills the silent air;
No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain
Breaks the serene of Heaven.
In full-orbed glory yonder moon divine
Rolls through the dark blue depths.
She shines upon the hills and rocks, and casts
Upon their hollows, and their hidden glens,
A blacker mass of shade—the breeze is heard
That rustles in the reeds; the little wave,
Which ripples to the shore, and leaves no foam,
Sends its low murmur far.

SOUTHEY.

LOVELY as was the appearance of every object, lighted up by the radiance of a brighter moon, shining in a clearer sky than she had ever witnessed in a European climate, so pre-occupied were Lady Earlingford's thoughts, and so rapid her steps, that she marked nothing but the path she was tracing—aimed at nothing but to pursue with most speed the nearest road to the spot whither her course was bent. The

most impressive stillness reigned throughout the island; the air, though fresher than by day, was so calm, that not a leaf moved; scarcely at distant intervals could the sound be heard of a wave gently breaking upon the shore; every bird seemed at rest; the very insects which so gaily had sported in the sun's setting beams, had now retired to their secret haunts; and her own foot-falls, light as they were, appeared to her heavy and loud when contrasted with a tranquillity otherwise so profound.

She at length reached the place whither a curiosity undefinable, but not to be repressed, had conducted her; and directing a quick and half-terrified glance towards the seat on which the volume had been placed, a deadly faintness stole over her when convinced that it no longer retained its station! She leant against a tree, gasping, and scarcely able to stand; and so tumultuous were the throbbings of her heart, that she almost fancied she could hear it beat: "All doubt, then, is at an end!" she mentally cried. "We are in the vicinity, and may, feeble and unprotected as we are, fall into the power, from one mo-

ment to the other, of the unknown being, whoever he may be, by whom, as well as by ourselves, these wilds are haunted. Horrible thought! How shall I disguise from my unsuspecting Viola the danger which hovers overs us! How support the view of her agonizing affright when, as it inevitably must, the fact becomes known to her!" As these thoughts rushed through her mind, an object, hitherto undescried, lying near the very spot whence the book had been removed, caught her eye. She eagerly advanced, and beheld a brace of dead birds, of a species similar to that which Viola had borne to the cave. What might this mean? Had these been left as an offering of goodwill to the unseen owner of the purloined volume? or had they been accidentally forgotten? "At all events," cried Lady Earlingford, "I will not appropriate or even touch these doubtful spoils. They may be designed only as snares to ascertain our still being upon the island; since, how can the sportsman tell, that the book discovered in so sheltered a recess, may not have lain there for weeks, and have been the property of some European now departed from the

coast? No; I will not leave a trace of this midnight visit; the security of my defenceless girl perhaps depends upon the prudence of this moment! I will now return to her, ere she can, I trust, have missed me from her side."

This resolution was instantly put in execution, and Lady Earlingford re-traced her steps to the cave with as little molestation as she had quitted it. Viola was still asleep. Her mother, without disturbing, took her accustomed place upon the same couch, and shortly afterwards sunk into the same happy state of forgetfulness.

The following day brought with it no occurrence of any importance. Lady Earlingford, still distrustful, though less agitated than on the preceding evening, commanded her looks and voice sufficiently to ward off from Viola any fresh alarm: yet, she permitted her not, without great repugnance, to stray beyond the precincts of their cell: and when, towards the close of day, her usual time for indulging in the luxury of reading, Viola missed the dear volume which she had neglected to bring back from the recess, all her supplications failed

in prevailing upon her mother to sanction her going thither in search of it. Though grieved to oppose so natural a wish, Lady Earlingford was so perfectly aware of the uselessness of such a measure, and so little convinced of its safety, that she persevered in her refusal, even with pain to her own feelings.

Another day dawned upon them; and the prudent mother, adhering to her plan of secluding Viola as long as possible within the limits of their embowered and almost impervious retreat, enjoined her strictly not to stir, whilst about noon, she herself sallied cautiously forth in pursuit of a necessary supply of provisions.

Her absence was short; yet, to Viola it appeared endless,—and the instant she heard the rustle of her approach amongst the underwood, she darted forth to meet her, exclaiming with looks of transport: "My mother! my dearest mother! We are *not* alone in the universe! The blessed sound of a fellow-creature's voice has once more reached these ears!"

She was proceeding, when, aghast and trembling, Lady Earlingford seized her

hand, and said in a voice hollow from dread.—"And were you seen, my Viola?"

"No, my dear mother; nor have I myself yet beheld the being from whom the voice proceeded.—But imagine my delight!—The accents were those of gay and innocent childhood. Oh, never, never shall I forget the rapture with which I first caught the exhilarating sound! At intervals, I even fancied that I could distinguish the echo of a sportive laugh; and I found myself involuntarily joining in its glee."

"Did you hear no answering sound? No older voice?"

"Once," replied Viola, "I half persuaded myself that from some very distant spot, an anxious and impatient call, or rather shout, was uttered. But either my imagination deluded me, or the person continuing to retreat, was soon beyond the reach of being again overheard."

Lady Earlingford, at the conclusion of this little recital, heaved a sigh, and with an air of utter dejection, sat down upon a low rock at the mouth of the cave, and spoke not a single word.

After having observed her some minutes

with astonishment, Viola found room to place herself on the same seat, and putting one arm affectionately round her waist, said: "My mother, why this melancholy silence? You disappoint all my cheering hopes! I had fondly flattered myself that my tidings would have brought only consolation to your heart; I had anticipated the happiness of again seeing upon your dear, dear face, an expression of joy! Why is it, on the contrary, that your accustomed thoughtfulness seems deepened into a look of positive distress?"

After a short pause, during which Lady Earlingford reflected that the moment appeared arrived when it became indispensable to dismiss all further reserve, she struggled for composure, and answered: "I will tell you, my dear girl. It seems probable from the particulars which you have related, that we are about to become the involuntary associates of beings with whose customs, tempers, and prejudices, we are wholly unacquainted. They may consider us as intruders, and regard us with an unfriendly eye. They may oppress nay, even enslave us! How can we resist them?

Viola—I will now speak to you without disguise. Two days ago, at the recess, it was no enemy of the brute creation from which I so abruptly fled! In the thicket which you saw me so anxiously explore, I detected a heavy blunt-pointed arrow; it was not, as in Europe, headed with metal, but with stone, and seemed adapted to the sole purpose of knocking down game. The bird which you humanely endeavoured to preserve had, doubtless, been struck in its flight by this clumsy and imperfect weapon. My dearest child—the conviction thus forced upon me that we were in momentary danger of seeing ourselves at the mercy of beings who, perhaps, know not what mercy means, almost bereft me of my senses! In the night, whilst you slept, I stole again to the recess. Our book was gone!—but in its place, a sort of commutation seemed tendered to us; for on the seat upon which you had rested I found an offering of dead game."

Viola listened to these particulars without any of the dismay which her mother had anticipated. More in dread of a prolongation of the state of abandonment in which they had hitherto found themselves,

than of any other probable calamity, she cheerfully exclaimed: "My dear mother, what is there in the relation you have given me to interpret into an omen of evil? You know—alas! you have had but too much reason to know—the despondency which has hitherto held possession of me; its gloomy effect upon my temper has made me a scourge rather than a blessing to you!—yet, let it tend to prove, that the more cheering view which I am inclined to take of this affair, results not from the habitual buoyancy of my spirits, but from the really strong probability there appears, that whoever it might be who left the game for our acceptance, meant us kindness and encouragement. No ferocious savage would have shewn such forethought and liberality. My dearest mother, be persuaded, as I am, that these islanders are a gentle and benevolent race: they will succour and serve us; and, perhaps—oh, delicious thought! they may assist in conveying us to some shore less unfrequented by Europeans; they may be the agents of our restoration to friends, to country, to home, and happiness!"

Hope, like sorrow, when breathed forth

by lips we love, irresistibly communicates a portion of its influence to our own hearts. Lady Earlingford, re-animated by her daughter's prognostics, and not disdaining to be fortified by her example, felt all her terrors, for a season, allayed; and ventured, though still with timidity, to rest her eyes upon the prospect of a brighter future.

During the remainder of the day, they could converse on no other subject than that of the fellow-inhabitants whom so many circumstances indicated to be in their vicinity. Viola loved to think, to speak of the infantine voice which in the morning had conveyed such pleasure to her ear. Its tone had proclaimed happiness; it must therefore be confident of kindness: "And will not those," she cried, "who delight in contributing to the felicity of a child; who rear it with indulgence, and protect it with fondness—will they not have hearts to treat with generosity, to feel for, and to aid, two helpless strangers, two solitary females, thrown by misfortune upon their coast, and dependent solely upon their hospitality! Oh, my admirable mother! Wherever there are such cordial principles

of natural affection—wherever there exists a good and tender parent, there must be hope for the outcast and the afflicted!"

Touched by the genuine warmth with which an observation so truly filial was uttered, Lady Earlingford pressed her daughter to her bosom, and said: "You have made a convert of me, Viola! I cease to believe it possible that we can be in any danger amongst those who, as you remark, have the best feelings of our nature so strongly implanted within their breasts. I still, indeed, want resolution to expose *you* to the chance of a discovery, preceded by no certainty respecting the sentiments entertained towards us by these unpractised natives: but this evening, or to-morrow morning, I will undertake the adventure singly; and by the information which I may be enabled to bring back, we will regulate our future conduct."

"Were I apprehensive," said Viola, "of any disaster likely to attend the expedition, I should supplicate you to renounce it, or insist upon sharing the same peril. But my trusting heart finds room for no suspicion; and I shall regard your temporary ab-

sence only as a measure calculated to procure us permanent protection, and faithful allies."

Emboldened by this suggestion, Lady Earlingford, as soon as the heat of the day abated, embraced her lovely and animating counsellor, and departing from the cave, took the road leading to the recess.

She arrived in its vicinity, as on so many former occasions, without encountering any sight that was not now become familiar to her eye. With a beating heart, however, ere she ascended the last rough step formed by nature in the rock which conducted to the shady retreat, she cast forward an enquiring glance to assure herself that all was safe: but what were her sensations when this glance discovered to her two human beings, stretched under the shelter of a tamarind tree, and, apparently both—Europeans! The one, a man, whose elbow rested on the ground, whilst his hand supported his uncovered and finely-formed head, was deeply absorbed in the occupation of reading, and the book before him was the identical volume which Viola had lost. A bow and arrows were lying beside

him; and nestling close to his bosom, slept a child, about four or five years of age, placid as Innocence personified, and beautiful as an infant cupid.

Lady Earlingford remained gazing some minutes at this interesting and unexpected picture, in motionless surprise: the unconscious stranger neither heard nor saw her, his whole soul seeming engrossed by the pages he was perusing. The attitude in which he reclined concealed his face from her view: but his figure was young; the shape and colour of his hand denoted that it belonged to a gentleman; and there was in his general appearance a gracefulness that indicated the habits of polished life.

In attempting, at length, to retire, as she hoped, unperceived, Lady Earlingford struck her foot against a small fragment of loose rock, the noise of which, as it rolled down the steep, attracted the stranger's attention, and induced him hastily to turn his head. Their eyes met—they knew each other instantly; and Lady Earlingford, with an air of pained surprise, of keen mortification, drew back, and prepared once more to retreat.

The stranger, meanwhile, had sprung on his feet, and stood a moment irresolutely regarding her. Then, joining his hands in an act of supplication, he wildly conjured her not to go, adding, half reproachfully: "Even in a desert, Lady Earlingford, is my presence so hateful to you? Are you sworn to behold me as an enemy even here, where you may never behold any other individual of your species? Is not this too vindictive? Is it not barbarous—uncharitable—unchristian!"

"Enmity is not the feeling," said Lady Earlingford, "which influences me. I lament the unhappy predicament in which I find you, and sincerely bury all resentment of the past in concern for the present: but can my delaying to go from hence afford you any alleviation? No, Mr. Fitz Aymer; you have yourself placed a barrier between us; you have so acted, that neither in this spot, nor in any other, can it be desirable that we should ever meet!"

"You lament my situation!" repeated he, with bitterness—"Oh, mockery! inhuman mockery! What a heart must be your's! How dead to all the social feelings!

How cold, stern, and inexorable, must be the nature which, after a calamity such as we have experienced, rejects the only prospect that may ever offer of communion with a fellow-being! Hear me, Lady Earlingford," added he, "hear me, and then wonder, if you can, at these reproaches! Such is my craving for the sight of a human being, that had I, in this solitude, encountered the most abhorred of ruffians—had I met with a murderer, or a madman, I should have hailed his presence with joy! Any face would have gladdened my eyes—any voice would have warmed my heart that broke the loathsome stillness—that gave life to the dreary uniformity of this miserable scene! Am I more obnoxious to your sight than a wretch such as I have described?"

"This is an inquiry which it must surely be needless to answer. I have blamed you severely, and you too well know with what just reason. But others have spoken of you with praise; others, to whom you have not given equal cause of complaint, have loudly proclaimed your merits. Ah! why

did you exclude me from the number of those who might have paid you a similar tribute?"

"Probably there may have been exaggeration both in the praise with which you have heard me mentioned by others, and in the censure cast upon me by yourself.—But, for Heaven sake, Lady Earlingford, banish from your mind, at a moment like this, all remembrance of our past dissentions:—think of me now, only as of a partner in adversity, who, if he can be of the slightest service to you, will bless you for employing him. Command me, task me to the utmost of my power. There is nothing I would not attempt,—no office however menial—no undertaking however laborious, in which I would not joyfully engage to palliate the cruelty of your fate, or to lighten the inconveniences with which it must be attended."

Softened in defiance of herself by the friendliness of this language, the rigour of Lady Earlingford's brow began to relax, and she thanked him with the gentlest gratitude. Quick in observing the advantage

which he had gained, he besought her not to hasten so precipitately from him, and with an air of the deepest interest, enquired into the particulars of her escape from the wreck.

She informed him of the means she had adopted to give herself a chance of preservation should the vessel be dashed to pieces; she described to him the manner in which she had been floated to shore by the tide; and then, without entering into any further details, expressed a wish to be told how he had effected his own rescue.

"Partly," he answered, "by swimming, and partly by letting myself be drifted to land as I clung to some of the fractured timber of the wreck. I probably reached the shore at a spot very distant from that on which you were cast, else we must have met sooner: but till the day before yesterday, I had not the slightest suspicion that the island contained a single inhabitant, either native or foreign, except this child and myself."

"And who," enquired Lady Earlingford, regarding the lovely boy with admiration

and tenderness, "who is this beautiful creature? You have no younger brother?"

"No; we are wholly unconnected. He is the son of a lady who perished in the wreck. She was in bad health during the whole time we were on board, and seldom appeared amongst the other passengers. I had known her husband before he went to India. He was an officer in my brother's regiment, and I had served as a subaltern under him when I first entered the army. This gave me an excuse to seek her acquaintance; and not being very anxious for general society, for I was just recovering from a severe illness, we were almost inseparable companions throughout the voyage; partook of the same meals, and, as invalids, were glad to partake of the same tranquillity. When the dreadful alarm of imminent and general danger resounded through the vessel, she sent for me. I had attached myself particularly to her boy; and, at that moment of fearful and solemn suspense, she recommended him in language, which no human being could have heard unmoved, to my pity and protection;

—embraced and blessed him; and, with an energy not to be resisted, implored me to lose no time in making such exertions as might preserve both the child and myself. I staid with her, however, till the last minute. She had been so uniformly friendly to me; there was so much benevolence in her character, and so much softness in her manners, that it was indescribably painful to me to think of abandoning her. But when at length the ship struck, and an universal burst of horror and despair reached us from the decks, she renewed her supplications with almost frenzied impatience, and—need I say how reluctantly—I left her!"

Affected by the remembrance of so awful a moment, Fitz Aymer paused, and a tear of almost filial regret rolled down his cheek. Lady Earlingford had no power to speak; the motherless boy was standing beside her; she strained him to her heart, and at that moment, almost hated herself for the severity with which she had first treated his preserver.

Recovering more self-command, Fitz Aymer presently thus went on: "If there was any merit in the struggle which I made

to rescue this poor boy, how, more than seven-fold, has it been rewarded!—His total reliance upon me;—his unreflecting vivacity; his exemption from all anxiety for the future, or disgust of the present, have been perpetual sources of comfort to me. Never did I, till now, experience in its full force the blessing of having something to love,—the inestimable advantage of being called upon, by motives not wholly personal, to use exertion. Had I been thrown utterly alone upon this shore, so desolate, so deplorable would existence have appeared to me, that I scarcely can persuade myself I should have thought it worth making the slightest effort to preserve! But I try your patience too much by talking so long of myself. Let me now ask,—where have you hitherto been secreted? Where obtained shelter during the night?—So impervious must be your retreat, or so inexpert my researches, that nothing, I believe, would have brought us within view of each other, had not the anxiety which you probably felt to recover this lost treasure," looking at the volume of Shakespear, "conducted you again to the spot where you had left it.—Can you forgive

my usurpation of so tempting a resource?—If you knew what a solace it has been to me, I think—nay, I am persuaded, that you would pardon the transgression—even in *me!*"

"Indeed," replied Lady Earlingford, "I pardon it most readily, and can well allow for the force of the allurement. Happily, I have other books to supply its place, and, for the present, am content to leave this in your hands."

She then acquainted him with her recovery of some of the effects which had bolonged to her nephew.

"I saw his name," said Fitz Aymer, "in the first page of this volume. But tell me, Lady Earlingford—have you the consolation of believing that he survived the loss of the ship?"

She was on the point of answering him, when, deceived by her look of serenity, he hastily exclaimed: "He lives!—I read it in your countenance!—Perhaps, even, he is the companion of your solitude?"

Had the most glowing meridian sun-beam darted across the face of Lady Earlingford, it could not have been more brightly illu-

mined than it was by this intimation!—The experiment, wild as it was, which it tempted her to try, she scarcely allowed herself the pause of a moment to weigh. The very suggestion that had given birth to such an idea she deemed providential; and answering Fitz Aymer therefore with a sort of ambiguous pleasantry, she said: "That I am not wholly without a companion you will soon be convinced; but of what age or sex, you must be satisfied to remain ignorant till to-morrow."

She would then have bidden him farewell: but with a renewal of vehemence that almost startled her, he cried: "Can you believe—can you have the inhumanity to expect, that after a banishment so dreary and so absolute from all fellowship with humankind, I can thus calmly submit to hear, that there are others of my race within reach of being known, to whom it is your cruel pleasure to deny me all access! Lady Earlingford—you shall *not* leave me till you have appointed the exact spot, the exact time when we may meet again! Oh, rather, far rather, would I see you approach me with the most inveterate antipathy—

hear you address me with the sternest rigour, than be again consigned to the blank, the almost maddening solitude which I have hitherto endured."

Lady Earlingford, though but little pleased by the arbitrary tone in which this was spoken, had too much wisdom to exasperate him by a harsh reply, and mildly answered: "Mr. Fitz Aymer, I know how to feel for your situation; I know how to excuse the impetuosity of your language, assured as I am, that whatever may be your prevailing faults, that of giving way to violence, when conversing with a woman, would never have been amongst the number, under circumstances less trying to your temper. Recal your good-humour, however, now; and suffer me to depart in peace. To-morrow, about noon, I will be here again—and not alone. Meanwhile, farewell."

"But—may I not attend you to your retreat? May I not, at least during some part of the way, be your escort?"

You *may*, no doubt; but I much wish that you would forbear. You have proffered me a thousand services; I ask only

for the deference which is due from every man of honour to the wishes of a female thrown into his power."

There appeared to Fitz Aymer something so extraordinary in the serious opposition thus persisted in to a request so natural as his had been, that a suspicion of its motive rushed across his mind, and made his dark eyes flash with delight! Casting them down to conceal his internal emotion, he drew back; assured Lady Earlingford that her will should be his law; bade her good night, and suffered her to depart without hazarding again a single remonstrance.

CHAP. V.

I am too weak
For solitude—any thing
Of action, difficulty, fatigue, or toil,
————any thing
But stillness and this dreadful solitude!

SOUTHEY.

THE absence of Lady Earlingford had been so much longer than her daughter had expected, that when she once more beheld her, she threw herself upon her neck with a mixture of agitation and thankfulness that deprived her for some minutes of all power to express her feelings otherwise than by alternate tears, smiles, and caresses.

"Never, never again," at length she cried, "must you require me to submit to so long a separation!—Never, never again, dearest mother, must you put my obedience to so severe a trial! During the greatest part of the time you have been away, I have endured agonies! What, or who, my

dear mother, can have detained you such an age?"

Lady Earlingford on her road back to the cave, after parting from Fitz Aymer, had fully arranged her future plan of conduct, and was now completely prepared to answer all her daughter's enquiries.

"Viola," replied she, "I have to announce to you a circumstance which, if not calculated to afford us much satisfaction, may, I trust, by prudence and caution, be productive of no mischief. We are not the only individuals saved from the wreck. Two other Europeans are upon the island."

Rapture danced in the clear eyes of Viola on hearing these words: "Blessed, blessed intelligence!" interrupted she. "O, my mother! who are these rescued fellow-exiles?"

"Moderate your expectations, my dear child," resumed Lady Earlingford, "or, great, indeed, will be your disappointment! One of them is an officer, whom perhaps you may occasionally have seen during the voyage when we went upon the deck. His name is Fitz Aymer. Do you remember him?"

"Not in the least. But we went so sel-

dom upon deck till evening, and there were so many officers (poor souls!) on board, that I may have passed him, amongst others, a hundred times in the dusk, without knowing who he was."

"One great reason, Viola, why I so rarely mingled with the general society in the ship, was the wish I had to avoid encountering this gentleman. He seldom, it is true, appeared in public, not being in good health: but from the time I heard that he was on board, I had a constant dread of meeting him. Our family has had particular cause to complain of him; and an animosity subsists against him in the mind of your father, which no time probably will ever eradicate. Had I known that he meant to make the voyage in the vessel we sailed in, I would sooner have renounced the chance of obtaining a passage this season, than have embarked with the same captain: I did not however make the discovery early enough to profit by it: but to avoid being forced into any communication with him, I made your studies a plea for living so much in our cabin, and I practised every possible means of eluding him

as often as we were forced from our retirement. By these precautions, I escaped the pain of treating with marked reserve a person who, I saw, had made a favourable impression upon the rest of the passengers; and I was spared the unpleasant task of exposing to your knowledge a story which could only have excited your disgust. I now allude to it to impress upon your mind the necessity of circumspection. You must behave to him with no outward shew of distrust; for the calamity he has suffered appears to have given unwonted asperity to his character: misfortune softens some, others it irritates: but whilst it *is* misfortune that effects the change, the duty of those who possess more equanimity, is to evince forbearance, and to avoid every circumstance which might aggravate the sufferer's misery. I would have you then testify good-will towards Mr. Fitz Aymer. But his principles are not to be relied upon; and I recommend it to you continually to bear in mind, that there is reason to believe, he is, of all others, the man least fitted to become the friend and protector of a young woman in your position."

"O, my dear mother," exclaimed Viola, "I have now no wish but to avoid him! A man who has incurred the indignation of my father—whose morals are bad, and whose temper seems but little better, is an object rather to awaken aversion than curiosity."

"Avoid him, my child, you cannot. But, I can point out to you, at once, the means of obviating every objection to your associating with him. He knows that I have a companion, and suspects that Edmund Earlingford, your, I trust, less ill-fated cousin, is the person. He saw him, no doubt, repeatedly during the voyage, but they knew each other too slightly to converse, and the chance is, that Mr. Fitz Aymer retains no distinct remembrance of his face. The wardrobe of poor Edmund is completely in our possession; you are precisely of his height, and though a year or two older, may pass for being of the same age. There is a strong family resemblance between you; and, should you assent to my proposal, I am persuaded that in personating so youthful a model, you incur no

chance of detection. Can you submit, my Viola, to so strange a transformation?"

"I am wholly indifferent about it," answered Viola. "In such a scene as this, what anxiety can I feel as to my appearance? *You* still will know me, under whatever disguise, and that to me is enough. I have no wish, believe me, to subject myself to any observation from Mr. Fitz Aymer. Your report of him half tempts me to repine, that in his stead, Providence had not preserved some better man. But, my dear mother, was there no reality in the gay voice which I heard in the morning? Was it the coinage of my brain, or something supernatural? Must I, with Caliban, begin to think, that

'The isle is full of noises,
'Sounds and sweet airs that give delight, and hurt not!'

Are we on enchanted ground, or did I, verily and indubitably, hear to-day the accents of a sportive child?"

"You did, my love. That child is under the protection of Mr. Fitz Aymer. He rescued it from the sinking vessel, and swam

with it to shore. The mother of the sweet boy perished in the wreck; she and her son were, like ourselves, sailing to re-join a husband and a father—but not like us were they spared to each other!"

Viola sighed over the fate of the devoted parent, and felt more than ever grateful to the Power which had preserved to her her own.

"We will adopt the poor little orphan!" cried she. "We will cherish him, my dearest mother, and strive as much as possible to repair the loss he has sustained! Oh, now, I begin to wish for to-morrow! Did you not say that it is to-morrow you are to have a second interview with this child and his friend?"

"Yes; we are to meet them, as I did to-day, at your favourite recess. I was unwilling to appoint a nearer scene of *rendezvous;* for till I can better ascertain the disposition of Mr. Fitz Aymer's mind respecting us, I think it good policy to reserve a place of occasional retreat from his society. He is unacquainted with the existence of this cave, and I am by no means solicitous to hasten the discovery."

With revived animation, since now she had learnt the residence upon the island of *one* human being whom she and her mother could love, Viola proposed, in order to accustom herself as early as possible to the matamorphosis, to make her first essay of Edmund's habiliments that very evening. Immediate recourse was therefore had to the friendly chest, and all the requisites for a youth's accoutrement were successively applied to the lamentable purpose of converting a graceful, soft, and interesting female, into a shy, down-cast, awkward looking boy.

"It must be confessed," said Lady Earlingford, scarcely knowing, as she regarded her after the strange toilet was completed, whether to laugh or cry, "it must be confessed that till you have learnt to wear this new garb with more ease, and to discard a little of the tell-tale consciousness lurking in your aspect, you have no great reason to thank me for recommending so unfavourable an exchange! It has altered the very character of your countenance; banished all its open and artless simplicity, and substituted in its stead a look of sheepish in-

quietude the most ridiculous I ever witnessed! But perhaps it is fortunate that your face should be in masquerade as well as your person. I am convinced that no one who had only slightly known you in your usual dress, would recognize you again in your present attire."

Viola heard these comments with perfect unconcern. Had she still been an inhabitant of that world which had smiled on her opening bloom, her feelings might have been different: but in her actual predicament, she was reckless how she looked; and having once consented to adopt the proposed disguise, had no object in view but to habituate herself to wear it with as little inconvenience as possible. She kept it on therefore till the day closed; and consented without a sigh to the downfall of her luxuriant tresses. They were deemed both by herself and her mother incongruous with her present appearance; yet, that mother, in severing them from the youthful head which they adorned, and on which she had often delightedly, and even proudly, contemplated them, felt a pang of regret,

which, though ashamed to avow, she scarcely knew how to conquer.

At the appointed moment, the next day, the half-reluctant pair sallied forth towards the recess. Lady Earlingford, sensible that it was their interest to propitiate their new ally, carried with her, in a basket of Viola's construction, an assortment of linen, and whatever else she could best spare from her little magazine of European commodities, and deemed most likely to conduce to Mr. Fitz Aymer's comfort.

"As for our library," Viola had observed, "he has helped himself so unceremoniously to one of its most valuable volumes, that I entreat you, dear mother, not to dismember it for him any further—unless, indeed," she laughingly added, "you chuse to bestow upon him this old Latin Grammar and Dictionary, and these two or three Persian and Moorish books, which only serve to tantalize us every time we look at them."

"How generous!" cried her mother:—"But might not Mr. Fitz Aymer justly wonder that a youth who has been so well

instructed as Edmund Earlingford, should endure to part with such precious lore?"

"Perhaps he might!—I had forgotten the respect I ought to feel for Latin."

Bearing the basket between them, they soon reached the steep path conducting to the place of interview. Fitz Aymer was already at his post; he stood on the edge of the acclivity watching for their arrival. The instant he caught a glimpse of them, he bounded down the rugged descent, and was at their side. He glanced his eye slightly over Viola, and then darted its gaze eagerly forward, in the vain hope of beholding the approach of some other form. An expression of acute disappointment overspread his features on finding that no one else appeared; and an awkward silence ensued, which was first broken by Lady Earlingford: "I have brought you," said she, "a little offering, Mr. Fitz Aymer, which, circumstanced as you now are, I am assured will be welcome."

She then apprised him of the contents of the basket; and before he had time to thank her, enquired for his infant companion.

"He is approaching," said Fitz Aymer, looking up the path; "but, unassisted, the way is not very safe for him. With your permission I will run and meet him."

Then, as if glad of an excuse to quit them a few minutes, he swiftly retraced his steps along the track he had just descended, leaving Lady Earlingford and Viola leisurely to follow.

Prejudiced against him, and unwilling to think or to speak of him more than was absolutely indispensable, Viola had neither enquired the age of Fitz Aymer, nor asked any questions as to his figure and appearance. The discovery that he not only was young, but had every exterior advantage which a fine form, and a manly countenance, full of fire and intelligence, could give him, surprised, but at the first moment, was far from pleasing her. She compared her own borrowed and insignificant semblance with the natural loftiness of his, and shrunk into nothing at the contrast: "O, my dear mother!" she whispered, "how he will disdain me!"

"Disdain you, my Viola?—By what

privilege? Are you not his superior? Where is the human being whom you have ever injured or offended?"

Lady Earlingford had spoken with an earnestness that had heightened her colour: and Fitz Aymer on rejoining them, fancied he discerned a species of indignation in her eye which he could alone attribute to his previous neglect of her young fellow-exile. He tried to atone for it by immediately addressing to Viola a few words of kindness and good-will: "I shall be happy," said he, extending towards her his hand, "to become better acquainted with you. You must be aware that there is little I can do towards alleviating your situation: but all that is in my power, rely upon my performing with readiness and pleasure."

Viola's lips moved to thank him, but their accents were inarticulate, and her eyes only, by their expression, distinctly spoke her acknowledgements.

Turning next to Lady Earlingford, who was caressing the little boy, Fitz Aymer said: "This youth, then, is your sole companion?"

Lady Earlingford *bowed* her affirmative;

she feared to *speak* it lest her voice should falter.

Another interval of silence on the part of Fitz Aymer was presently succeeded by his saying, with some hesitation: "I had, I own, encouraged myself to believe, to hope, at least, that your associate was—was a very different object!—This, I presume, is the owner of the purloined Shakespear—Edmund Earlingford?"

With all the steadiness she could command, Lady Earlingford confirmed the conjecture; and Viola, averting her face, concealed from him the blush which would tacitly have discredited the imposition.

All parties, now, during a period which from its length became embarrassing, seemed at a loss what next to say. There was a constraint in the looks of Lady Earlingford, though her manners were civil, that insensibly communicated itself to the feelings of her new companion. His spirits, so lately raised by discovering that there were other individuals upon the island, now sunk; and he internally exclaimed: "How little is my situation improved by the accession of associates such as these!—Here is a woman who

evidently hates me;—and the poor boy, whom she keeps under her dominion, has either been taught to entertain the same sentiments, or is so much accustomed to hold her in awe, that he dares not shew any disposition to cordiality! How little," he repeated, "do I gain by such companions!"

Whilst these unpleasant ruminations occupied his mind, Lady Earlingford, observing the discontent that contracted his brow, made an effort to put him into better humour by talking to him of his little *protegé:*

"Where do you find shelter," said she, "for this poor child at night?"

"In a species of hut," answered Fitz Aymer, "rudely constructed—I will not say by my own *ingenuity*, but by my own *labour* —at no very considerable distance from this spot. It might perhaps amuse you to witness the strange expedients to which I have been obliged to have recourse in order to raise even so slight a fabric. Will you like to walk with me to see it?"

Lady Earlingford accepted the proposal, and they immediately set out. Fitz Aymer would have induced her to lean upon his

arm, but she declined it, alleging, that since her residence upon the island, she was become too expert and indefatigable a walker to require support. To Viola, of course, no offer of the same kind was made: Fitz Aymer treated her without the smallest ceremony, and whilst he carried the basket with which her mother had presented him, she silently followed, leading the little Felix by the hand.

A walk of about a mile along a border of low land between the mountain and the sea, brought them to a beautiful woody knoll, in the shadiest part of which Fitz Aymer had fixed his habitation. Viola, the instant she discerned it, released the hand of Felix, and hastening forward, had almost crossed the threshold, when, suddenly checking herself, she drew back, looked ashamed at her own precipitancy, and made way for Lady Earlingford to precede her.

"My good friend," said Fitz Aymer, smiling, "you may enter without being announced; there is no one within whom your abrupt appearance will surprise or discompose!"

Viola, still mute from unconquerable

timidity, passed her arm through Lady Earlingford's, and they stepped into the simple edifice together.

Every thing which they there beheld impressed them with surprise, and involuntary admiration of the persevering industry of its unassisted constructor. The little tenement, thatched with palm leaves, was supported upon poles, and walled by a sort of lattice-work formed of the pliant boughs of the bamboo, and lined with cocoa-nut leaves, so disposed as to render its inside impervious to the rays of the sun, without excluding from it the advantages of light and air. A variety of roughly-formed tools —such as hatchets, chisels, &c. made of shells or stones sharpened, and fitted into handles, were scattered about; and a few domestic moveables were completed; as, for instance, a rustic bench, a table, and the frame of a little bed for Felix. In one corner was Fitz Aymer's own couch—a homely collection of leaves and grass, spread upon the unboarded floor: beside it lay his bow and arrows; his preparations for constructing a variety of fishing-tackle,

and the volume, treasured by him as partially as by Viola, which he had made prize of at the recess.

With uplifted hands and eyes, Lady Earlingford, after surveying some time this extraordinary retreat, exclaimed: "And have *you* performed all this, Mr. Fitz Aymer? *You* whom I have been accustomed to consider as a mere self-indulgent idler! *You* who, except when your profession roused you into energy, never knew what action and exertion meant! Is it possible that you can have done all this; and done it in so short a time?"

"I have had ample reason," said Fitz Aymer, with an air of mortification, "to be convinced that your ladyship never was inclined to judge of me very charitably! The charge of pursuing a systematic course of self-indulgence, no man can have less justly deserved. I entered the army at eighteen, and have been exposed to much hard and trying service: my health, in many instances, either from wounds, or climate, has suffered severely; I have been a prisoner, and have undergone every priva-

tion that a prisoner can experience. If, in the intervals of pain, in the transient periods of remission from military duty and its attendant hazards, I have partaken with some excess of the enjoyments which my age, fortune, and station in society contributed to render so alluring, ought I to be stigmatized as a practised voluptuary, averse from every species of manly effort, and wholly devoted to personal gratification?"

"You have put too harsh a construction upon my words," cried Lady Earlingford: "I meant nothing so injurious to your character. But will you not allow, that to find in a gay, and somewhat luxurious man of fashion, such as I have hitherto known you;—one accustomed to attendance, and privileged to toil only in search of amusement;—to find in such a personage, all this contrivance, all this aptitude for manual labour, must appear passing strange!—Yet, believe me, the wonder I experience is far surpassed by respect and admiration."

"You make me ashamed," cried Fitz Aymer, "of the petulance I have displayed! Forgive me, Lady Earlingford; and allow something for the tormenting conscious-

ness, that I am under condemnation in your thoughts.—The benevolence of character which towards any one else in my position, would invite you to testify the kindness of a parent, is obviously so chilled in its operation towards me, that almost every sentence you utter conveys to my jealous apprehension a meaning of severity and reproach."

To divert his thoughts into a less painful channel, Lady Earlingford now asked for some details respecting the means he had employed to accomplish so much labour, and the impressions of mind under which he had had courage to begin, and pursue his task.

"The first three or four days," answered he, "of my enforced sovereignty over this untenanted domain, the desperation of my feelings was such, as, at intervals, almost to subvert my reason! As this horrible distemperature of imagination subsided, I sunk into a state of listless, vacant apathy, less painful, no doubt, but equally distinct from the firm, healthful resignation, that could lead to any beneficial enterprize: my faculties were without spring, and my views

seemed exclusively confined to the wretched drudgery of maintaining a mere animal existence. In so degenerate a frame of mind, I bless Heaven, I was not formed long to remain. I considered, that though in such a climate, and in possession of such abundant resources for the support of life, I was in no danger of being impelled to industry by irresistible want; yet, in the full vigour of understanding and strength, my misery must be encreased by yielding to perpetual sluggishness. Hope was not quite extinct within my breast. A day of release might yet arrive; why not attempt, in the interim, to render my imprisonment less irksome? Why, because an outcast for a season from society, degrade myself at once into a savage? I reflected also, that should any length of time elapse ere the means of escape were afforded me, I should have much to answer for, if I suffered the abilities of my young companion to lie wholly dormant. Would he not, ere long, cease to be a dependant? And did it not rest with me to infuse into him the ideas—to accustom him to the habits which might

render him a friend worth possessing? I determined to make the experiment; to give him and myself a fixed place of residence; to furnish and surround it, as well as circumstances would allow, with European accommodations; to preserve him as much as possible from contracting the wild and irregular manners of an uncivilized state; and if, hereafter, nothing better should be attainable, to rest content, if not happy, with the single associate that Providence should have spared to me. These were the instigations, Lady Earlingford, which enabled me to accomplish all that you behold; and from the moment that I begun to labour, I became, comparatively, blessed. But since I have seen you—nay, from the instant that (though unseen) I was assured that I had fellows in misfortune upon the island, a sort of feverish agitation, an anxiety and impatience have preyed upon my spirits, which have put all my hard-earned philosophy to flight!—and when, at length, I encountered you, and obtained an avowal, that you were *not alone*—oh, what were the visions which

my fancy drew! How did I dwell upon the illusions of my own creation:

> ‘ Turn them to shape, and give to airy nothing
> ‘ A local habitation and a name!’

To all but the latter part of this recapitulation less of facts, than of feelings, Lady Earlingford and her daughter had listened with unequivocal sympathy, and the most manifest interest. Its conclusion filled Viola with perplexity, and seizing the first opportunity, whilst Fitz Aymer was at some distance, of speaking to her mother without being overheard, she said: “What can have been the *visions*, the *illusions*, at which he so ambiguously hints?”

Distressed how to answer her, Lady Earlingford was glad that the immediate re-approach of their host gave her an excuse to wave the subject. She herself fully understood to what he had alluded. On finding that she survived—on learning that she had a partner in exile, it was not very unnatural that he should look forward to the appearance of her daughter. Seldom as Viola, during the voyage, had been visible upon deck, Fitz Aymer could not be

ignorant that she was on board: perhaps, during one of her evening walks, he had seen her; perhaps he had heard her admired. Lady Earlingford was but too well aware that beauty possessed over him an influence the most unbounded: if, thoroughly sensible of Viola's claim to that distinction, he had buoyed himself up with the hope that it was *her* whom in his calamity he should meet, the partial mother could not but admit that the disappointment she had prepared for him must have been extreme. Yet, the more obvious was that disappointment, the more fervent became her desire to prolong his deception. In *any* situation, Fitz Aymer was the last man whom she would have thought herself justified in encouraging to pay attention to her daughter. She believed him to have been of dissipated habits, and thoroughly relaxed opinions. Towards a niece of her husband's, a young married woman of extraordinary attractions, his conduct had been reprehensible in the highest degree; and that lady's brother, a ward as well as nephew of Sir William's, Fitz Aymer was accused of having initiated in scenes of pro-

fligacy, and a rage for play, which had nearly ruined him the second year of his majority. Charged with enormities such as these, he would have been inadmissible beneath Lady Earlingford's roof in England: *here*, though forced into intercourse with him, she could not but deem him the most dangerous associate that her evil destiny could have cast in Viola's way.

CHAP. VI.

Be of good cheer, youth:—You a man? You lack a man's heart!

SHAKESPEAR.

AFTER bestowing upon the erection of the hut every commendation which it so justly merited, and after a minute examination of all the substitutes for comfort with which its constructor had provided it, Lady Earlingford would have quitted him: but the instant she hinted her purpose, Fitz Aymer's countenance became clouded, and with a degree of emotion which he appeared to find unconquerable, he exclaimed: "This then, unfeeling Lady Earlingford! this is the unsocial, miserable, and estranged mode of life we are perpetually to lead! Can you find pleasure in thus closing your heart against all the kinder sensations of humanity? Can it gratify you to depress, to distance, to evince this utter want of consideration for the feelings of a victim

like yourself to calamity? One, who if he has trespassed, has never grown callous in error! One whose heart, when he first beheld you here, longed to greet you as a mother! Oh, shew for me a little of a mother's indulgence! I cannot let you persevere in hating me!"

What could Lady Earlingford say to supplications so urgent? She cast a glance towards her daughter to observe how they appeared to affect her. She was leaning against the door-way of the cabin, contemplating the youthful pleader with an air of such undisguised concern, that her mother judged she could not too speedily put an end to entreaties which awakened so much commiseration. She therefore said: "I yield to your prayers, Mr. Fitz Aymer, and consent to remain here till evening. You hunger and thirst for society with an ardour which impels you to put more value upon our company than, under any other circumstances, I believe you would be tempted to assign to it."

Fitz Aymer thanked her for this concession with a warmth that fully proved the high rate at which he prized it; and

then, to convince them, he said, that he was not without the means of entertaining visitors, he placed before them some cold game, and a variety of newly-gathered fruit. Lady Earlingford asked him how he had succeeded, being provided with no flint and steel, in kindling the fire by which the birds were dressed.

"I availed myself," answered he, "of the slender knowledge I had acquired upon these subjects from the perusal of voyages and travels; and in lieu of the usual method pursued in Europe, produced a few sparks (not without infinite difficulty, it must be allowed) by whirling the end of a stick rapidly round in a hole drilled with the sharp point of a stone in a dry branch of wood which I kept down with my feet. These sparks I fed with dry leaves and grass till they burst into a flame, which, in a place abounding as this does with fuel, it was easy to keep up."

Their repast, which, though not very gay, was at least unembittered by dissension, being ended, Lady Earlingford proposed adjourning to the margin of the sea: "It is always cool," she observed, "under

the shelter of the cliffs; and even Edmund, now, is become fond of a ramble upon the sands."

"Was he ever otherwise?"

"On our first arrival here, he attached so many dreadful recollections to the sight of the sea, that no object could to him be more abhorrent. Habit has worn away in a great degree this sensitive repugnance; and, of late, our evening strolls upon the shore have afforded us nearly equal pleasure."

"This should remind you, dear Madam," said Fitz Aymer, significantly, "that antipathies *are* to be overcome, if the individual by whom they are entertained is but willing to combat against them."

No answer was made to this observation; and, presently, in the same order as before, they quitted the cabin.

As they leisurely paced along: "Is it not remarkable," said Lady Earlingford, "that in a climate where the air, though pure, is so hot, there should be no appearance of venemous insects or reptiles?"

"The observation is just," answered Fitz Aymer, "as it relates to every thing

but ants. Of these, an intolerable number annoys me every night; and to poor Felix they have been so troublesome, that, till I constructed for him the little bed-frame which you saw, in order to raise him some height from the ground, he scarcely slept a moment undisturbed. When the rainy season sets in, I flatter myself these diminutive plagues will retreat to their subterraneous nests."

"The rainy season?" repeated Viola.

"There can be very little doubt," resumed he, "that we shall experience such a season. From the situation of this island on the southern side of the equator, its periodical vicissitudes of weather, in all probability, resemble those of the southern parts of Africa and America, where the winters and springs correspond with the summers and autumns of Europe. I have no means of ascertaining our exact latitude: but a variety of circumstances lead me to conclude it to be such, that, from February to August we may, at intervals, expect very heavy falls of rain, accompanied by frequent storms of thunder and lightning."

"I am sorry for it," cried Lady Earling-

ford. "I had hoped that we were placed here in a region of almost uninterrupted serenity: the temperance of the elements contributed more to reconcile me to the spot than all its other advantages. Can you form any estimate, Mr. Fitz Aymer, of the extent of our island?"

"In my progress round its shore, I have, upon a rough computation, calculated it to be about four or five miles in circumference. It may be more, for I am not quite certain that I ever quite accomplished its circuit."

"Would it," enquired Viola, apprehensively, "would it, in calm weather, be *very* difficult of approach for a European vessel?"

This was not a question which Fitz Aymer felt very willing to answer. The fact is, there had appeared to him a tremendous surf all round the island, and no safe anchorage near any part of it, the whole shore being, as well as he was able to judge, surrounded by a steep coral rock. Abreast of a river, however, which he had discovered at the back of the isle, a boat he fancied might venture to row between the breakers,

and get safely to land. This conjecture he communicated to his anxious auditors, and it served to keep alive a faint hope of future deliverance.

As evening drew near, Lady Earlingford, reminding Fitz Aymer that there was no moon, expressed a wish to direct her steps towards her accustomed resting-place: she acknowledged to him that this was a cavern amongst the rocks; and the approach to it, she added, was so steep and intricate, that if they deferred their return to it till the short and feeble twilight wholly failed them, they should be in danger not only of losing their way, but of breaking their necks.

"How do you fill up the long, long evening hours?" enquired Fitz Aymer, "Are you able to sleep as soon as it is dark?"

"We are not driven to that expedient by wanting light to employ ourselves. We have invented what we flatter ourselves is a very ingenious sort of lamp, which we feed with cocoa-nut oil, and which affords us the power of reading nearly as well as we could by a candle. To you, therefore, as

you will find when you examine your basket, we have made over the greatest portion of our European stock of wax lights."

"Ten thousand thanks! They come at a welcome moment. Till lately, having neither book, nor any other means of sedentary amusement, I wished only to gain, by fatigue through the day, the power of sleeping away the hours I was compelled to spend in darkness. But I detain you, Lady Earlingford, and if your road is so rugged, it is dangerous to let you lose time. I could, however, ensure you a much safer walk to your cell, if you would allow me to attend you. You know not how expert a mountaineer I am become."

"Would you," said Lady Earlingford, "leave poor Felix alone?"

"O, no; I would carry him. Custom has so well reconciled me to that measure, that go where I will, rather than make him unhappy by seeming to desert him, I convey him in my arms with scarcely a consciousness of the burthen. Let me, then, be your escort this evening."

When any thing is solicited with impor-

tunity which we have no power effectually to refuse, our compliance is rather passive, than either gracious or prompt. Such now was Lady Earlingford's. Her assent was merely given because she suspected that whether it was obtained or denied, Fitz Aymer *would* accompany them, and she wished at least that he should suppose she did not imagine herself left without an option.

"Since you are so good," she cried, "as to volunteer this service, I will not absolutely decline your attendance: but I am really sorry for the fatigue you are so unnecessarily undertaking."

"Fatigue! What is the fatigue I have endured to-day? Have I not spent it in repose and indulgence? Oh, when have I enjoyed *such* a day! Dear Lady Earlingford, you must not deny me its counterpart to-morrow. I can bear no more solitary meals! You must, from this time, let me be your constant purveyor, and, at our future banquets, either your guest, or your host. I will not intrude upon your mornings. My own shall be devoted either to

the pursuit of game, or to fishing: but my evenings—my mid-day hours—Lady Earlingford, they *must* be spent with you!"

"There is no part of speech," replied she, forcing a smile, "which you seem to remember more accurately than the imperative mood!"

"Pardon, pardon me, I entreat! I blush to have provoked the remark: but—may I say it?—there is in your aspect, in your deportment towards me, so little appearance of a genuine disposition to shew me any favour, that despairing of success if I plead too humbly, I fall into the opposite extreme of expressing myself too arrogantly. But you shall find, dear Madam, that in proportion as you relax in rigour, I shall improve in courtliness. Believe me, indulgence will not make me an encroacher."

This dialogue passed whilst they were pursuing their way to the cave. On reaching it, there was still light sufficient to enable Fitz Aymer to discern its entrance: but without making any attempt to explore its interior, he sat a few minutes conversing with them upon their terrace; and then, bidding them good night, after reminding

them of their engagement to dine with him again on the morrow, he departed.

The silence of Viola throughout the day, whether originating from excess of shyness, or resulting from dislike of their new associate, had been equally remarkable. Lady Earlingford was anxious to ascertain its precise cause; and as soon as Fitz Aymer had left them, she said: "Your spirits, I perceive, my dear child, are rather sunk than raised by the reinforcement which our party has received. You are not yourself, this evening; you have not been yourself the whole day. Tell me, is the presence of Fitz Aymer painful to you? What impression has he made upon your mind?"

Viola hesitated a moment, and then answered: "A melancholy one, my dear mother. I never can look at him without lamenting that a man so capable of exciting interest, should be so much less deserving than he appears. But that is not all," continued she, with agitation: "I abhor myself in this disguise! It takes from me all courage to raise my eyes; it gives me the feelings of an impostor, and it deters me, almostcontinually, from venturing to open

my lips, lest the first sentence I utter, nay, the very sound of my voice should lead to a discovery of the deception we are practising. Under this odious garb, I have neither the dexterity, alertness, and enterprize of a boy; the consequence and dignity of a man; nor the usual claim to deference and attention of a woman. I am a mere cypher; a poor, helpless insect, who, it is evident, will never awaken the slightest degree of consideration."

Lady Earlingford could almost have smiled at the ill-disguised pique against Fitz Aymer which dictated these repinings. Accustomed, whenever she had been in the society of young men, to be treated with distinction and observance, Viola, though not vain, was conscious of her attractions, and the novel circumstance of being so entirely overlooked, was as depressing to her spirits, as humiliating to her pride. Lady Earlingford felt for a weakness which, at Viola's age, was too natural to be arraigned with severity; she had not yet lost the remembrance of her own youth, and secretly admitted, that it would be difficult to place

a lovely and accomplished girl, habituated to admiration, in a more mortifying and trying situation. Time, however, she trusted, would reconcile her to Fitz Aymer's neglect: perhaps, when he knew her better, the disinterestedness of her temper, the attaching qualities of her heart, her sense and cultivation, might win his regard, and induce him to treat her, even as *Edmund Earlingford*, with more attention. These were probabilities which, when suggested by her mother, somewhat soothed Viola's wounded spirit; and whilst their impression lasted, she calmly sunk to sleep.

At the moment when Fitz Aymer, the next day, conjectured that Lady Earlingford and her companion would be setting out for his cabin, he ascended to the platform adjoining their retreat, in order to accompany them during the walk. Viola, seated upon the turf in the shade, was weaving a sort of hat of the same materials as the baskets which she had so ingeniously fabricated. Fitz Aymer stood looking at her a considerable time, but scarcely spoke. The delicacy of her hands,—the softness of

her countenance, and the heightened bloom which his observation brought into her cheeks, gave her, in defiance of her dress, an appearance so truly feminine, that, lost in wonder, he internally exclaimed: "What a creature to devote to a life of warfare!—to turn adrift into the scorching plains of India!—The very first month of military duty in such regions would have demolished him, and the shipwreck which has snatched him from such a profession, he ought to regard as a providential intervention in his favour.—I have a very faint recollection of him on board the ship: but I had fancied him at once darker complexioned, and more robust. This, however, would be the place of all others in which to teach him enterprize—to season and embrown him. Clambering, as I do, up hill and down,—exposing himself to the sun, or buffetting against the wind, he would soon lose that fragility of aspect which in a boy excites both pity and contempt. I will accompany, and accustom him to haunts of savage sublimity in the centre of the island, of which he probably has at present no idea; —I will instruct him to use a bow—to

defy fatigue, and to conquer difficulties. He is now good for nothing but to weave baskets, and live under the shelter of his aunt's wing."

Lady Earlingford at that moment came forth from the cave, and Fitz Aymer, after the greetings of the day were over, asked whether he might be allowed to view the interior of her retreat? She led the way towards it, saying: "We have not the merit, like you, of having been the architects of our own dwelling: the hand of Nature had prepared it for us: all that was required on our part to enjoy within it gratitude and happiness, was a spirit more resigned to the fate that has made it our home."

"Your *temporary* home, only, I trust!" cried Fitz Aymer. "Hope never deserts *my* bosom;—let it, dear Madam, always be the inmate of your's."

In their way after this to the hut, Fitz Aymer made some advances towards becoming acquainted with Viola, which, however, she bashfully shrunk from. All that he said sounded to her harsh and unfeeling. He told her that he meant to attempt the construction of a raft, and asked

whether she would go with him on a fishing expedition? He exhorted her to take longer rambles, and to habituate herself gradually to more exertion;—and ended by saying, that if she would try her skill as an archer, he would answer for it, that, before they had been a week longer upon the island, she would be as good a sportsman as himself. She listened in silence;—sometimes half tempted to smile at the seriousness with which he recommended these Amazonian exploits; and at others, though conscious of her folly, hurt by the familiarity of his tone and language.

They spent the rest of the day together, and, at night, Fitz Aymer again saw them safe to the cave; sat with them some time at its entrance, and went away in perfect good humour, secure of meeting them again on the morrow.

Little change now occurred in their mode of life for several days. As time developed to Lady Earlingford the better parts of his character,---his warmth of heart, his activity of mind, and openness of temper, her reserve insensibly diminished; and from the moment he perceived that she

began to place some confidence in him, the gratitude he evinced, and the boundless devotion to her service which he manifested, powerfully aided the conversion of distrust into friendship and reliance.

His progress with Viola was slower. She dreaded his representations on the subject of what he termed her indolence of habits. Whenever they met, he had some project to propose, some new device to communicate, with the hope of stimulating her to participate in his own love of action. The raft which he had purposed to set afloat, he informed her, ere long, was completed; and urged by his repeated importunities, she at length consented to go with him to the water side and look at it. It was composed of pieces of bamboo strongly lashed together, and secured to the shore by a rope of twisted grass.

"What think you, Edmund," cried Fitz Aymer, "of this simple species of vessel? Should you like to see me take a little voyage upon it?"

"Not at all!—It seems firmly enough put together, but must be extremely dangerous to stand upon."

"That is an objection," resumed Fitz Aymer, "which would much better become Lady Earlingford than *you*.—Sink or swim, however,—off I go!" and thus saying, he loosened the raft from its fastening, sprung upon it, and pushing it from the shore, cried, as he floated along: "If any evil betides me, Edmund, be sure you sing my requium! I shall haunt you else continually in the shape of a Walking Raft."

Viola turned from him, disconcerted by his sarcasms, frightened at his rashness,—yet almost wishing that she had possessed resolution to encounter with him all the hazards of the enterprize.

Adroit and collected, Fitz Aymer managed his perilous bark so ably, that neither accident nor perplexity attended his excursion. At the accustomed hour he joined Lady Earlingford, safe, and in excellent spirits; absolved Viola from the duty of chanting his dirge, and contributed an admirable dish of fish to their repast.

He had, from the beginning of their intercourse, so regularly adhered to the practice of coming to escort them to the cabin before dinner, that his approach was now consi-

dered as the signal for setting out, and his attendance regarded as a matter of course.

About a week after the adventure upon the raft, he failed however for the first time to appear at his wonted hour. Lady Earlingford knowing what long rambles he often took, and how much fatigue he underwent in various ways, accounted for his absence by concluding that weariness had overpowered him, and that he meant on the present occasion to exempt himself from a trouble which only his own good nature could ever have induced him to think necessary: "It was selfish," added she, "so long to let him perform this superfluous ceremony. We will go to him today, Viola, without waiting to be sought.—I would not have him suppose me exacting and punctilious."

Viola said very little: but she looked unusually serious, and a secret dread occupied her mind of some fearful disaster. They descended from their retreat with as much swiftness as the steep avenue to it would permit, and in half the usual time reached the cabin, and entered it. Fitz Aymer was not there.—None of the cus-

tomary preparations for their meal had been made. Nothing announced his having approached the humble dwelling since early morning. All looked forlorn, deserted, and melancholy.

Surprised, and now somewhat alarmed, Lady Earlingford turned to Viola, and said: "What can be the meaning of this? I almost fear that some accident has befallen to him."

Viola could not speak. With an air of the deepest consternation, she stood a few seconds mournfully looking round her, every object her eye rested upon reminding her of him to whom she owed so many cheering hours; of him whom she accused herself of having often treated with such petulant ingratitude, and whom it was now but too possible some new calamity might have torn from their society for ever! Suddenly the remembrance of the detested raft occurred to her. She uttered a cry of terror, and rushing out of the cabin, flew to the spot where a few days before she had seen it moored. It was still there: "Heaven be praised! Heaven be thanked!" she fervently ejaculated. "Whatever may de-

tain him, he, at least, is safe from the perils of that treacherous element!"

She turned to retrace her steps to the cabin, and had almost reached it, when the sight of blood upon the grass struck a dreadful chill to her heart, and the appearance of Felix, weeping and scared, confirmed her worst surmises: "Speak, Felix!" cried she—"speak, dear boy! Tell me where he is! Tell me what has happened to him!"

"Oh, he bleeds, and is so badly hurt!" exclaimed the child. "Come to him, Edmund; come and try to do him good. He is there." And the boy pointed to the cabin.

Viola darted forward, and quick as lightning, stood at Fitz Aymer's side. He was seated on his lowly bed, tearing up some of the linen with which Lady Earlingford had supplied him, to make bandages for a severe wound in his leg. It still bled profusely; and sick almost to faintness, Fitz Aymer scarcely had strength for the task he had undertaken.

"O, let *me* help you!" cried Viola, in an accent of mingled pity and affright.

"Do, my dear Edmund," languidly answered he. "I am too much weakened by loss of blood to have power to help myself."

He fell back upon his couch as he spoke, and closing his eyes, Viola, on casting her own timidly upon his face, fancied, from the ghastly hue which overspread it, that he either was dying or dead. Words are too feeble to describe the horror she experienced!—She sunk upon her knees beside him; she called upon his name in tones of piercing anguish; "Friend—brother—comforter!" she exclaimed; and whilst pouring forth these epithets, whilst ejaculating prayers for his restoration, and alternately chafing his temples and his hands, the feeble beatings of his pulse were the only indications she perceived that he still survived. She now started up, looking wildly around for water; and returning the next minute, she sprinkled his face, and again kneeling, raised his head, and applied the cool liquid to his lips. Its freshness revived him. He looked up; thanked her, called her his kind Edmund; and in a short time a slight tinge of colour again re-visited his cheek.

CHAP. VII.

Is it not now the hour,
The holy hour, when to the cloudless height
Of yon starr'd concave climbs the full-orb'd moon,
And to this nether world in solemn stillness
Gives sign that to the listening ear of Heaven
Religion's voice should plead? The very babe
Knows this;———
————————————his little hands
Lifts to the Gods, and on his innocent couch
Calls down a blessing.

MASON.

LADY EARLINGFORD, filled with amazement by the abrupt exit of her daughter from the cabin, had hastened in pursuit of her, but not expeditiously enough to ascertain which direction she fled in, and, consequently, not expeditiously enough either to accompany or detain her. She had since wandered at a venture from place to place, calling anxiously upon her name; and, at last, terrified and breathless, re-entered the hut, in the faint hope of finding Fitz

Aymer returned, and of obtaining through him assistance in recovering her fugitive.

Every thought unconnected from the situation in which she found him, was banished the instant she beheld his pallid and suffering countenance. With an activity that was only to be surpassed by the admirable presence of mind which accompanied it, she performed for him all the offices of a surgeon with all the tenderness of a mother. Fitz Aymer knew not how to express the deep gratitude he felt: he blessed her, he repeatedly raised her hand to his lips; and as he looked at her, and acknowledged the relief which he owed to her judicious kindness, his eyes glistened with tears.

Viola, on the entrance of her mother, had discontinued her own services, and retreated to the door of the cabin, where, seated on its threshold, poor Felix, silent and disconsolate, remained alone, looking from time to time with dismay on the traces of blood upon the ground. Viola drew him to a little distance from the hut, and sitting down with him upon the grass, endeavour-

ed to draw from him some account of the manner in which the accident had happened. All that she could comprehend from his imperfect detail, was: that having been out many hours (Fitz Aymer being that day less successful than usual as a sportsman), and growing tired, the child had extended himself upon the ground to sleep, in a place which his friend deemed so extremely insecure, that, instead of calling to him, and suddenly awakening him, he had attempted, the instant he perceived his situation, to descend precipitately from a steep rock on which he was standing, in order to bring the thoughtless boy away in his arms. The agitation with which he hurried down for this purpose, took from him his wonted firmness of tread; his foot slipped, and in falling from the height of many feet on the stony ground, he had struck and lacerated his leg so violently against a sharp projection in the rock, that the agony he suffered prevented, during a considerable interval, his being able to rise and pursue his progress towards his sleeping charge: "When he awoke me," concluded the child, "he

had tied a handkerchief round his hurt, but it was all bloody—and he bled the whole way home!"

"And did this happen," enquired Viola, "when you were very far off? Had he a long way to come?"

"O, yes; *I* thought it a long way, for I was tired and hungry; and I am sure *he* must have thought it long, for though his leg was so bad, he *would* carry me."

Viola now led the lovely boy back into the cabin, anxious to procure for him some nourishment. Fitz Aymer held out his hand to her as soon as she appeared, saying: "I never shall forget, my dear Edmund, the kindness you have shewn me. You are not quite so skilful a nurse as your aunt: but you have discovered no less feeling; and the interest which you have taken in my misadventure, I own, surprised as much as it gratified me."

"Surprised you!" repeated Lady Earlingford. "Did you then imagine that Edmund was without humanity?"

"Nothing, I believe," answered he, smiling, "would have called forth any visible sign of humanity towards *me*, but

the sight of this miserable bleeding leg! Edmund has not hitherto looked upon me with a friendly eye; but hereafter, I hope, he will love me better!"

Viola averted her face, and without answering, bent over the little boy, whom she busied herself in assisting to cut the food which she had just placed before him. Fitz Aymer, never surprised at her taciturnity, though often chagrined by it, dropped the subject, and looking towards Felix, said: "I must take that little fellow out with me no more when my rambles are likely to be of any extent. He gets into all sorts of perilous situations whilst I am in pursuit of game; and some day or other, instead of bringing home dead birds, I shall have to bring home a dead boy! Will you allow him, Lady Earlingford, to remain under your protection on these occasions?"

"Most readily. But flatter not yourself that there will be any necessity to commit him to my care, on this account, for many days. You must resign yourself to the prospect of, at least, a week's confinement."

"A week! And in the name of mercy,

how am I to fill up the lonely, tedious interval ?"

" You are not *very* apprehensive that we shall neglect you in your misfortune ! Besides, you shall have the use of our whole library."

" Books are of no value to me now, in comparison to society. I always, you well know it, dear Madam, looked upon the instant when I discovered you in this wilderness as the most auspicious of my life ! If such was the joy which your presence gave me then—then, when I could but doubtfully speculate upon your future friendliness—what must it be *now* when you have testified for me such goodness, such generous concern ?"

Lady Earlingford imposed silence upon him, assuring him that if he did not endeavour to keep himself very tranquil, he might bring on inflammation, and materially retard his own recovery. She placed within his reach some cooling fruits, promised not to leave the cabin till she saw him better ; and then sat down to partake with Viola of the refreshment they both so much required.

As evening approached, Fitz Aymer, though he forbore all complaint, grew so restless, his hands felt so burning, and his eyes looked so heavy, that Lady Earlingford, with true maternal anxiety, resolved to watch by him during the night. She explained not to Viola her motives for this determination; but simply telling her, that his accident having made him so helpless, it would be unfeeling to leave him without attendance, she desired her to repair to the cave, and to take Felix with her, in order to keep every thing perfectly quiet around the patient.

Viola never disputed a command from her mother: but she looked grieved at being sent away; lingered some minutes, and then, slowly approaching Fitz Aymer, bade him good night, and expressed an earnest hope of finding him better in the morning:

"Thank you, my dear boy," cried he, "thank you for this, and every other instance of your good will." He then shook hands with her, and Viola, startled at the feverish heat of his skin, retreated, sad at heart, and made way for the approach of

Felix. Fitz Aymer embraced him—bade him not stir from the side of Edmund—blessed, and affectionately dismissed him.

On the outside of the cabin door, Viola paused to take leave of her mother. It was the first time since they had been upon the island that they had agreed to so long a separation, and the parting was painful to them both: but Lady Earlingford, sensible that her motives for decreeing the measure were sufficiently important to outweigh all trivial and personal objections, bore the prospect of a transient absence with better courage than her daughter: "My dear child," cried she, as the dejected girl hung round her, "you teach me almost to regret—almost to wish I could retract, the promise I have given to remain here!"

"Oh, no, no! dear mother! Not for the universe would I have you retract it! I am willing to go—perfectly willing—only—"

"Only what, my love?"

"I don't know what I would have said. But, my dear mother, may I be here to-morrow, early?"

"As early as you please."

"Then, now, I think, I will leave you. Good night—good night, once more. Heaven preserve and bless--"

Ye both, she would have added: but checking herself, she took Felix by the hand, and at length departed.

Never had Viola entered the cavern, or thrown herself upon her humble bed with more mournful feelings than those which now oppressed her. Yet they were of a character which differed widely from those of a former period; they had little or no connexion with self; and though perhaps equally afflicting, they were certainly less dreary. Her's was now a social sorrow—a sorrow arising from pity; from gradually increasing interest for a suffering fellow-creature; it was no longer unmixed horror at her own calamitous fate; it was no longer that withering consciousness of utter desolation which had before so gloomily preyed upon her spirits; there was gentleness, there was softness in her present distress: in that which was passed, there had been nothing but awe, distraction, and despair.

Before she allowed her little companion to lie down, she made him kneel to say his

prayers. The child seemed not unaccustomed to the duty. Joining his innocent hands together, and raising his eyes with a look of reverence that touched her, he repeated a short form of intercession so admirably adapted to his age and comprehension, that he appeared to feel the meaning of every word he pronounced. As he arose from his pious posture, Viola kissed him, and asked who had taught him so excellent a little prayer.

His complexion altered, and his eyes were ready to overflow, as, with quivering lips, he answered: "Poor mamma!"

Viola wiped his tearful eyes, and folding him to her bosom, mentally cried: "I might have guessed it! Who but a mother could so well have instructed him!"

Yet she was anxious to gain information upon one point, which the child alone could render clear to her: "Does Mr. Fitz Aymer," enquired she, "ever make you repeat this prayer?"

"Yes; every night."

This brief reply gave to Viola a sensation of happiness which, but the minute before, she would have deemed herself incapable

of experiencing: "Oh, my dear mother!" she cried, "he cannot be the licentious being you described him! If he has this respect for religious duties, there must be goodness in him!"

Under the impression of this consolatory persuasion, she knelt to offer up her own petitions to Heaven, and then resigned herself to repose.

With the first ray of light, she and her little companion awoke. Children, when healthy, are like birds; they break through the bands of sleep at the earliest dawn, and impatient to be in action, are restless and dissatisfied till permitted to bask and frolic in the morning sun. Viola's slumbers had been less refreshing; she unclosed her eyes with a confused remembrance of painful dreams, and of some still more painful reality: and, as the events of the preceding day flashed with all their attendant circumstances upon her memory, she sprung from her couch, anxious to terminate the suspense she was in respecting Fitz Aymer's present situation.

She entered the cabin with so light a footfall, that the 'blind mole' could not

have heard her: Felix, treading as softly, followed. They found Lady Earlingford, scrupulous in the performance of her charitable office, still sitting beside the sick man's bed. He had recently fallen into a calm doze; but during the night had been in much pain, wakeful, and very feverish. Viola, who till now had never ventured to regard him with stedfast attention, fixed her eyes upon his face, and stood contemplating him with long and earnest gaze. His paleness could not surprise, though it afflicted her; she thought it had encreased since she last beheld him: but the fine character of his countenance, the dignity of his brow, the sweetness of expression about his mouth, the image he presented altogether of a noble creature smitten by sudden suffering, incurred in the cause of humanity, struck her so forcibly with mingled admiration and pity, that, unconscious of the length of time she remained surveying him---unconscious that her mother, with an aching heart, was watching her speaking countenance, she was yet standing motionless at his side, when Fitz Aymer awoke.

Quick as thought, colouring and abashed, she moved away; but not with such speed as to avoid being seen—not with such assumed composure as to disguise from him that she had been observing him with sentiments of commiseration. He raised himself on his elbow, and looking after her, said: "Why should you shrink back, my dear Edmund, as if ashamed of letting me perceive the kindness of your heart? Do you suppose that it can be otherwise than cheering and grateful to me to discover in you these friendly feelings? Come hither, then, and ask me fairly and frankly how I do?"

"Without making the enquiry," said Lady Earlingford, "Edmund may be assured by the tone of your voice that you are better. Is it not so?"

Fitz Aymer thankfully acknowledged that it was. The quiet sleep which he had enjoyed, had, he said, invigorated his spirits, and relieved the irritation of his wound. He expressed in the most animated terms his sense of her attentive care; and besought her no longer to delay seeking the

repose of which she must stand so much in need.

She assured him, that whilst so bright a sun was shining it would be vain to attempt sleeping: but as he appeared so much easier, she would leave him for about an hour, and refresh herself by taking a stroll upon the beach.

Viola accompanied her, and, contrary to her usual practice, seemed solicitous to make Fitz Aymer the subject of discourse. She related to her mother what had passed the night before between herself and Felix, adding: "Do you not think that this attention to the child's first and most sacred duty augurs favourably of his own principles? Does it not, my dear mother, incline you to soften your opinion of him? I know that you require no motive stronger than humanity to induce you to aid and serve him in his present distress: but all that you are performing, you would perform with more pleasure, if persuaded that the object of your exertions deserved as well as required your care."

Lady Earlingford had too much knowledge of human nature to be ignorant that

nothing gives a more powerful stimulous to an early and unconfirmed prepossession than any appearance of injustice towards the person who excites it. She therefore cheerfully concurred with her daughter in ascribing all due praise to Fitz Aymer for his conduct towards Felix; she spoke of him also upon other points, with general, though temperate approbation; allowing that his whole demeanour towards themselves had been uniformly irreproachable: "Yet we must not delude ourselves, my dear child," she added, "with an idea that we are in community with a faultless character. Here, it is true, Mr. Fitz Aymer not only displays many amiable qualities, but evinces no disposition to evil; and here, perhaps, were he always to remain, he might always merit the same commendation. But I have known him in society, Viola; and there I have had too much opportunity to convince myself that he is wholly incapable of resisting temptation."

"Shall I never be entrusted, my dear mother," said Viola, "with the particulars of his former history to which you have so often alluded?"

"I am reluctant to communicate them to you, not so much on Mr. Fitz Aymer's account, as from motives of delicacy towards other individuals, implicated in the disgraceful tale, whose misconduct, were we ever to re-enter the world, I should regret having exposed to your knowledge."

Viola insisted no further: but as she again drew near the cabin, she was sensible, that the feelings towards its inmate with which she had quitted it were considerably chilled; and that the untold transactions, whatever they might be, referred to once more by her mother, had effaced many of the better impressions which had recently began to stamp themselves upon her mind. Yet, in her attentions to the wounded man, there was no perceptible relaxation; nay, from being the offspring of principle rather than sensibility, they were more unembarrassed, and tendered with greater ease to her own feelings.

Amongst the effects which had belonged to young Earlingford, was a small chessboard, and a set of men. These, with Viola for his partner, were an inestimable resource to Fitz Aymer, who loved the game, and was

equally surprised and rejoiced to find in her an adversary worth contending with. Lady Earlingford, whilst they played, sat by at work; and Felix, happy in the enjoyment of his own locomotive powers, ran about from place to place, from friend to friend, with all the gaiety and all the restlessness of capricious childhood.

Towards evening, this useless energy was gently checked by Fitz Aymer, who observed, that oppressed by a whole night of watchfulness, Lady Earlingford had insensibly closed her eyes, and fallen into a quiet slumber. All was for some time kept profoundly tranquil. Viola had taken up one of the books which had that day been brought from the cave; and Fitz Aymer, she believed, from his perfect stillness, had imitated her mother's example. But she was mistaken;—ere long, he half raised himself from the reclining posture he had assumed, and leaning towards her, whilst cautiously observing Lady Earlingford, he softly said: "Edmund,—what has been the fate of your cousin?—Of Viola Earlingford?"

The blood rushed tumultuously into

Viola's cheeks at this abrupt and wholly unexpected enquiry, and stammering—faltering, whilst sedulously averting her face, she said: "Her fate?—Why should her fate interest you?"

"It must interest every man possessed of the common feelings of humanity. She was spoken of by all our fellow passengers in terms of praise such as I scarcely ever heard surpassed. Her manners were as much admired as her person; and though I never distinctly saw her face, the grace and delicacy of her form convinced me that what report said of her beauty was as just as it was enthusiastic. Half the young men on board were in love with her; and I might, for my sins! have added one to the number, but for the prudential vigilance with which her mother guarded her from my sight. She never appeared upon deck till evening, and as I did not dine with those who were gay and in health, I obtained only, and as if by stealth, a faint view of her when she issued from retirement for air and exercise.—But tell me, Edmund, is she safe?—You, and above all, her *mother*, could not be so placid, so undisturbed, if

you had not good reason to believe that she escaped."

Viola, who never till this moment had entertained a suspicion that Fitz Aymer had at any time bestowed the slightest thought upon her, was sensibly gratified by so undesigning a testimony of the favourable manner in which she was remembered by him. She was distressed, however, how to answer his enquiries; and detesting prevarication, it was not without an effort which cost her much pain, that she at length prevailed upon herself to say: "My cousin, we have every reason to hope, is ere now arrived in Bengal, and secure under the protection of Sir William Earlingford."

"But how was her preservation effected?"

"You must ask Lady Earlingford," replied Viola; "she planned—she contrived it all!—I can tell you nothing more than that her daughter is perfectly safe."

"By referring me to Lady Earlingford, you debar me from all probability of ever hearing another word upon the subject. She cannot bear that I should pronounce her daughter's

name; and once or twice when I have endeavoured to direct the conversation into that channel, she has parried my enquiries so dexterously, or discountenanced them with such seriousness, that I have been almost tempted to believe she had some unfortunate reason for wishing that Viola might never be spoken of."

"You do not, I hope, imagine," said the feigned Edmund, "that there has ever been any coolness—any difference between them?"

"Stranger things have happened! But, however, these are matters I can have no concern with: I only wonder at the mystery with which all reference to her fate has been avoided; and often regret, that when you and her mother were drifted to this shore, she should have been wafted to any other! Indeed, on being first informed that Lady Earlingford had a companion, I so firmly expected to behold her daughter, that the sight of *you*, my poor Edmund, was an inconceivable disappointment to me. But can you explain what Sir William's inducement could be to send for her to India?"

"Impatience, I suppose, to see her again. They have been separated above two years."

"Is she very much attached to him?"

"No daughter ever had more reason. He is the kindest of parents."

"And yet, no man was ever a more implacable hater!"

"I am sorry—*very* sorry that you should have had cause to think so! But why has he hated you?"

"Has not Lady Earlingford informed you?"

"No; it is a subject on which she always silences my enquiries."

"She is right; and I, my dear Edmund, must silence them also. I think you an admirably good boy, and I have much regard for you: but when I select a confidant, he shall be of maturer years."

After this, they relapsed into silence. Viola was afraid of saying any thing imprudent, and therefore glad to drop the conversation: and Fitz Aymer having gathered from her all the information she seemed willing or able to give, had no further wish to question her. Lady Earlingford in a

short time awoke, and earlier than was her custom (being much fatigued) retired with Viola for the night.

The first moment she was alone with her mother, Viola frankly communicated to her the whole of the dialogue which she had so recently held with Fitz Aymer.

The effect of such a disclosure may readily be divined. It filled Lady Earlingford with anxiety for the peace and happiness of her child. She had already descried in her, various indications of a growing regard for their fellow-exile, and this discovery of the interest which she had excited in him, it could not be doubted would powerfully tend to confirm the prepossession. To reprove, or even to remonstrate with her, might not only be unavailing, but dangerous. Viola had hitherto been undisguised and tractable; she had concealed from her mother no thought of her heart; she had submitted to her counsels with the docility of an infant. It was evident that the nature of her own sentiments towards Fitz Aymer was still undeveloped even to herself. Injudicious censure, by opening her eyes, might only teach her dissimu-

lation, chill her filial tenderness, and prepare the way for future disagreements. When was love ever subdued by argument? Yet, on how many considerations was the attachment, she appeared to be forming, most earnestly to be deprecated! Viola's hand, should their restoration to society ever be accomplished, was, by her father's decree, already disposed of; and had Fitz Aymer appeared upon the scene as a candidate for it, with no other drawback to his hopes of success, this engagement would have sufficed to ensure his rejection. Viola was still ignorant of the destiny that had been marked out for her. The individual to whom it had been projected to unite her, was in India; she had never seen him; never attended to any thing that had been said of him; and had entered the ship which was meant to have conveyed her a bride to his house, with as little suspicion of her father's purpose, as of the rough interposition of the elements which was to render that purpose vain. Yet, from one hour to the other her situation might be changed; the ties with society which appeared so completely dissevered, might

be re-united; and she who now seemed amenable for her conduct to Heaven only, and to her mother, might suddenly be replaced under the authority of a father, who, though he loved her, would indignantly spurn—at whatever cost to her happiness—all idea of alliance with Fitz Aymer.

The only measure upon which Lady Earlingford could resolve, with the hope of giving a timely check to the progress of Viola's alarming attachment, was that of revealing to her the matrimonial project entertained by her father. Wishing, however, to avoid exciting the idea of having any design in making this communication, she deferred entering upon it till an opportunity should present itself of doing so without apparent premeditation; and whenever the disclosure should take place, flattered herself that it would insensibly operate as a restraint upon the partiality which Viola might otherwise unreflectingly indulge. She loved her father, and had been brought up with so strong a sense of filial obligation, that if any thing could repress her lurking attachment, it would be the

terror of forfeiting by disobedience a parent's favour.

Meanwhile, to the perplexed girl's earnest solicitations for counsel how to answer Fitz Aymer should he again apply to her for information on the subject of Viola's rescue, Lady Earlingford answered: "We will not anticipate, my love, a circumstance which is now so unlikely to occur. Fitz Aymer has probably gained all the intelligence upon this point which he will ever require. I have no expectation that the name, or the remembrance of Viola will be brought forward by him again. He is so nearly a stranger to her, that it cannot possibly be a matter of serious interest to him to know how she escaped. But should he ever renew the conversation, refer him again, as you did this evening, to me. I shall know how to answer him with less embarrassment, and with less danger of exciting suspicion: and surely, my Viola can have no inclination to betray herself, at the very moment when he has avowed a disposition to admire her, which, neither in this desert, where no law can give it sanction, nor

in the world, where a father's voice would oppose it—she can ever countenance."

Viola seemed struck by the justice of this representation, and promised, if again questioned, to act strictly as her mother prescribed.

CHAP. VIII.

———It hath pleased
The searcher of the heart, by misery's test,
To prove our souls; then, here, mid lonely wilds,
Where none but Heaven can witness, we'll invoke
His ministering host.

SOUTHEY.

———With open lips,
And eager ear, and eyes which, while they watched
Her features, caught the spirit that she breathed,
Mute and enrapt he sat.

SOUTHEY.

WHEN Lady Earlingford, the ensuing morning, entered the cabin to enquire how her patient had rested, he was surprised to see her unaccompanied by Edmund.

"Why did he not come with you?" said Fitz Aymer.

"You will see him by and by," answered Lady Earlingford. "I do not now mean to remain with you myself five minutes. Tell me, therefore, how you do in

as few words as you can, and let me return to the cave."

"But why all this haste? And why so mysterious in your answers?"

"Are you very anxious—or, rather, are you *resolved* to know? If you *are*, experience has taught me that there is no redress—no means of escaping your urgency!"

"Do not say so, dear Lady Earlingford! I owe you so much, that I ought to be incapable of persisting in any enquiry which you may feel reluctant to answer."

"I am glad to find you disposed to be so acquiescent. But now, to account to you for asking to take Felix with me, I will tell you sincerely the inducement which we have to remain for the next hour or two at the cave. We have kept an exact account of the progress of time since we first landed on this isle: we know as accurately how many days and weeks have succeeded each other, as if we still were in a region where 'bells do knoll to church.' On the return of every sabbath, we acquit ourselves as decorously as we are able, of the duties attached to a day which we have been accus-

tomed to observe with reverence. We have books to assist us, and hearts, I will venture to say, equally humble, resigned, and grateful. Now, permit your young companion to be present during the celebration of our simple rites."

"And what has his friend done," cried Fitz Aymer, upbraidingly, "to merit this exclusion from them? Dearest Lady Earlingford, convey your books hither: honour this rude hut by making it your church, and honour *me* by believing, that I am not such a reprobate as to be wholly unworthy of joining with you in prayers to my Creator."

Lady Earlingford was surprised at his earnestness; but she could say nothing in opposition to his proposal, and therefore left him, to go in quest of Viola.

"This young man," said she, as she pursued her way to the cave, "is *determined* that we shall love him! Ah, my poor Viola! his very virtues will augment thy danger!"

The lovely girl, whilst awaiting her mother's return, had been renewing with some of her feathered friends the intercourse

which of late had been so often interrupted. Fitz Aymer had promised never to prosecute his shooting excursions in the immediate vicinity of the cavern; and the birds whom she had formerly attracted to it, had lost little of their familiarity. She was feeding and caressing them when Lady Earlingford entered.

"Why have you not brought Felix, my dear mother?" enquired she. "Did Mr. Fitz Aymer object to his coming?"

"No; but he seems desirous to have prayers read in the cabin."

The purest delight shone in Viola's eyes. She folded her hands, and raising them towards Heaven with looks that were also cast upwards, she seemed to be mentally returning thanks for this proof that Fitz Aymer wished to be in favour with his God!—that Fitz Aymer, their sole-appointed friend, wished to unite with them in the worship of their mutual Father!

An emotion so heartfelt would alone have brought confirmation to Lady Earlingford (had any been wanting) of the interest which Fitz Aymer had awakened in her daughter's bosom. She witnessed and

understood it with sorrowing dismay; but forbearing all comment, looked round for the books which she was to transport to the cabin, and having found them, took hold of Viola's arm, and once more quitted the cave.

Every thing which could tend to place her companion's principles in a serious point of view before Fitz Aymer, she deemed it her duty to promote. Viola, on each returning sabbath, had been accustomed at the cavern to read the service for which they were now assembled; and she read it admirably. Lady Earlingford, on the present occasion, put the book into her hands, and desired her, as usual, to undertake the duty. Trembling, and in accents almost inaudible, she obeyed: her voice however by degrees grew firmer; her powers revived, and ceasing to direct her thoughts towards him *with* whom she prayed, they soon rested wholly upon Him *to* whom those prayers were addressed. With a look of reverential awe, and in tones at once fervent, solemn, and full of touching intercession tones calculated to strike irresistibly upon the heart, she went through the sacred office. Never

had Fitz Aymer been rendered so sensible of its beauties; never had he felt himself inspired with feelings of such true devotion. The respect which he had long entertained for Lady Earlingford, was heightened by the proof now afforded him of the excellent precepts, the sincere love of religion which she knew so well how to instil into her pupils. He looked at her with veneration, and all the anxiety which he had hitherto experienced to establish himself in her good opinion, acquired ten-fold vigour: "Living," said he, "as I now do, in a society of angels, the primitive simplicity of the habits to which I am becoming inured, their temperance, their tranquillity, joined to the innocence and rectitude of character perpetually before my eyes, must, assuredly, contribute to influence in the most salutary manner the whole remaining term of my existence. If ever I am restored to society, I shall be restored to it a better man—and to you, Lady Earlingford, will the change, in a great degree, be owing."

"Pray Heaven I may ever be the humble instrument of so much good! To own the truth, I have often thought, Mr. Fitz Ay-

mer, that had you been early trained in the practice of self-controul; or had you happily been cast upon the world with fewer means of indulging your passions;—I have often thought, that there were those qualities, those propensities in your nature, which would have made you one of the best and noblest of human characters.—Alas! you must be fully sensible, that we can now scarcely admit this to have been the case!"

"I shall for ever deny," cried Fitz Aymer, with some warmth, "that I have been so wholly worthless as you believe—Yet, I will not attempt to exculpate every part of my conduct. In many instances I have been guilty of extraordinary folly and imprudence; I have exposed myself to a thousand calumnies—I have been daringly regardless of my own reputation, and fatally insensible of the lasting mischief which so arrogant a defiance of public opinion would entail upon me! You say, Lady Earlingford, that I wanted early guidance: nothing can be truer—I lost my father and mother whilst still a boy, and, except an elder brother, whom I dearly loved, but of

whom I stood not in the slightest awe, I had no male relations who chose to undertake the care of me. I was placed at a public school, and when my brother was upon foreign service, my vacations were spent in the house of a rich, an indulgent, and, sooth to say! not a very wise maternal aunt. She suffered me to comport myself exactly as I pleased; she gave me abundance of money; she pampered my appetite; laughed at my misdemeanours; and finally, dying before I had completed my eighteenth year, she left me her whole fortune. I was luxurious, but not indolent: and ample as were the means of self-gratification now in my power, I knew no happiness till I had obtained a commission, and joined the regiment to which my brother belonged. This transaction was not merely dictated by the idle vanity of wearing a red coat; I expected to see some hard service, and my expectations were amply fulfilled. But the love I bore my brother, the hope of acquiring distinction, and the pleasure I derived from a life of variety and enterprize, supported me through every difficulty I had

imposed on myself. After sundry vicissitudes, sundry dangers escaped, or incurred, an illness, contracted during my last campaign, compelled me to let my brother, who was ordered out to India, embark some weeks before me. The instant I recovered sufficient strength, it was my wish to follow him. I went on board, with that view, the very ship, dear Madam, in which you were a passenger: you know the rest, and you now also know the general outline of my history. I have neither courage to relate, nor would you have inclination to hear, all its particulars: but of this be assured, that notwithstanding the early independence I attained, notwithstanding the innumerable temptations which youth, wealth, high spirits, and pride of birth, accumulated around me, I have no action to reproach myself for (however appearances may be against me) which the most rigorous moralist could interpret into deliberate criminality."

Lady Earlingford would not contest this assertion, but she wondered at its boldness, and began seriously to believe, that she either must have injured him most hein-

ously, or that in the progress of a long course of profligacy, he had forgotten all distinctions between vice and virtue.

Viola, meanwhile, had listened to his sketch of past events with an interest and an avidity, unmixed with doubt, that imprinted every sentence in characters indelible upon her memory. To have discredited assurances uttered with such seriousness, with a look that denoted such veracity, and so immediately after she had beheld him engaged in the solemn duty of prayer and confession, would have appeared to her a degree of scepticism amounting almost to depravity. Ease of mind, and the innocent gladness of a virtuous heart, delighting in the rectitude of others, beamed in her aspect throughout the day: she spoke to Fitz Aymer, she looked, she moved with an air of reliance, of contentment and animation which he had never witnessed in her before. Little suspecting the real cause of these demonstrations, he ascribed them wholly to the peaceful influence produced upon her mind by the religious act which she had been performing; and in contemplating the serene radiance of her

countenance, he felt that sort of admiration and respect which he would have entertained for a celestial visitant from a better world.

A few days now released him from confinement, and restored to him in a great degree the capacity of wandering about as indefatigably as ever. Every morning, previous to beginning his perigrinations, he brought Felix to the cave, and committed him to the care of Lady Earlingford. Sometimes, on promising not to extend the boundaries of his walk too far, he prevailed upon Viola to accompany him: *her* consent, indeed, was not difficult to obtain: but that of Lady Earlingford was obviously given with reluctance, though, from the fear that a constant refusal would have a suspicious appearance, she seldom, in positive terms, withheld it.

During these rambles, Fitz Aymer's attention to his young companion could hardly have been surpassed had he known who she really was. Solicitous to spare her all unnecessary fatigue, he chose the most level districts, resigned to her the shadiest resting-places, and wherever an

unavoidable difficulty occurred, lent her such ready and friendly aid, that after every excursion her heart became more devotedly his own, and whilst they lasted, she experienced a sensation of happiness almost unalloyed by the slightest regret for the past, or anxiety for the future.

Lady Earlingford was right in conjecturing that he would revive the subject of her daughter's escape no more. Satisfied with knowing that she was believed to be in security, his curiosity wholly died away, and he spoke of her no more.

His conversation often turned upon the subject of his early military career. Viola loved to make him 'fight his battles o'er again;' and though she could not but shudder at the scenes of carnage he described, the devastations caused by an invading army, and the multitude of evils inseparable from war; yet, the partial instances of heroism he had witnessed; the traits of humanity he could record; the generous conduct of individuals towards the enemy when the heat of battle was over—all these excited in her mind an interest approaching to enthusiasm. From the warmth of friend-

ship with which he spoke of many of his brother officers, she felt assured that he had himself been a favourite amongst them; and when she reflected upon his perfect good-humour, his readiness to oblige, his animation of character, and truly social disposition, the only wonder would have been had it been otherwise.

They were one morning sauntering leisurely at the foot of a high cliff, deeply engaged, he in detailing, she in listening to the particulars of a retreat which had been attended by many circumstances of peculiar disaster, when the report of a musket, clear, distinct, though distant, reached their ears. They mutually started, and regarding each other with looks that seemed to imply a doubt of the testimony of their own senses, exclaimed at the same instant: "Did you, too, hear the incredible sound?"

"I did," cried Fitz Aymer, much agitated, "and it proclaimed the vicinity of Europeans!—It tells us that, perhaps, our deliverance is at hand; Oh, Edmund—how my heart bounds at the thought!—But the sound proceeded from the summit of this

cliff. I must seek a path that will enable me to ascend it. Go back to the cave, my dear boy; you cannot accompany me on so scrambling an undertaking; go back, and depend upon seeing me the moment I have any intelligence to communicate."

"Oh, let me go with you!" cried Viola, imploringly—"Fitz Aymer, I beseech you, let me go!—I can climb now nearly as actively as yourself;—I can do any thing, in short, but run the risk of encountering, alone, the unknown owner of the gun."

"Well, then, we will set out on this reconnoitring adventure together.—But, my good boy, let me give you one little piece of advice---till you gain nerves to face a man carrying a musket, never dream of being a soldier!"

Viola, disturbed as she was, could not listen to this counsel without smiling: "What profession," said she, "do you then think I ought to chuse?"

"You should be a clergyman:—you seem predestined to convert sinners, to comfort mourners, and to preach universal charity!"

"Would you come and listen to me?"

"Yes;—whether as sinner, or mourner; —and if ever I marry, Edmund, you shall perform the ceremony."

"Shall I?"—This half whispered interrogation was uttered in so conscious and singular a tone, that Fitz Aymer, stopping a moment, turned round to look at her: but outstripping him, she hastily began ascending the cliff; and forgetting his transient surprise, he lost no time in following her.

They now, with mutual ardour, sought to gain the top of the eminence. The track which they had chosen, though less steep than any other part of the ascent, was sufficiently toilsome to require the utmost energy and perseverance. Here and there, patches of coarse vegetation, scorched by the intense heat of the sun, found root in the rock, and served to bind its brittle substance together, and prevent its giving way beneath their feet, and rolling in loose particles down the rapid slope. These tufts of discoloured weeds, were of use also as stepping places, and without them, Viola would have found it impossible to proceed. Fitz Aymer afforded her all the assistance in his power: but the difficulties of the way

were such, that it was scarcely consistent with the safety of either to withdraw for one instant the most vigilant attention from their own path. The rays of a burning sun darted full upon their heads, and their thirst speedily became excessive: Viola, however, uttered not the slightest complaint; her great object was to keep as near her companion as possible: she felt more for his fatigue than her own; and remembering how recently he had been a sufferer by exertions somewhat similar, her chief dread was that of seeing him encounter any similar disaster.

At length, all obstacles surmounted, they attained the brink of a wide plain, broken and irregular, but affording an extensive prospect, and dotted with clumps of stunted, battered trees. No traces of human footsteps were to be discerned; no animals appeared, save a few birds; no indication of smoke; nor, upon the distant ocean, which bounded three sides of the horizon, could they distinguish any species of vessel, either Indian or European. All was inanimate, savage, and solitary. The

view to the east was circumscribed by the neighbouring eminences of the central mountain, rising high above the spot where they stood, yet appearing connected with it, and giving manifest indications of having, at some remote period, been fiercely acted upon by subterraneous fire.

Having taken a disappointed survey of the silent and uninteresting tract, and reposed themselves a few minutes in the scanty shade afforded by a cluster of the half-withered trees, they prepared to depart. An easier footway presented itself for their descent than the one by which, with such ill-rewarded labour, they had gained their present elevation; but it was wearisome from the extent of ground over which it led them;—and Viola, nearly exhausted, was obliged, on reaching the foot of the cavern rock, to sit down, and confess that she could proceed no further without taking some rest. She had half feared that this acknowledgment would draw upon her the imputation of effeminacy and want of resolution: but, on the contrary, Fitz Aymer accused himself of having overtasked

her strength, and exposed her to more exertion than it was reasonable to suppose her capable of enduring.

"No, no," cried Viola; "it was my own wish to accompany you, and I well knew, when I proposed it, that our path could not be strewed with rose-leaves. You have been so far from imposing any unnecessary difficulties upon me, that you have often assisted and favoured me in a manner that must considerably have impeded your own progress, and encreased your own toil."

"You deserved every aid I could give you, by the steadiness with which you abstained from harassing me with complaints, and the patience with which you bore every discomfort, and struggled to overcome every impediment."

He then suggested to her the prudence of observing at the cave the strictest silence, for the present, on the subject of the musket which they had heard discharged. He declared his resolution of devoting the whole afternoon to a diligent examination of every accessible spot in the neighbourhood; and promised, on his return, to

give her immediate information of the result of his search:—"But I begin to think it possible," continued he, "that what we mistook for the report of fire-arms, may have been only the fall, amidst reverberating hills, of some fragment of rock; or supposing that we judged rightly in ascribing the sound to the discharge of a musket, it is easier to believe that the weapon was acted upon by some person at sea, than that it is the property of any one who can have lain concealed upon the island."

"You forget," said Viola, "how limitted has been the extent of your rambles since your accident; and how many days that accident obliged you to remain wholly inactive. The path leading from the cavern to the hut is all that Lady Earlingford or I ever traversed during that period;—consider, therefore, with what ease a new set of occupiers may have landed upon our shore, and hitherto escaped our observation."

They now saw Lady Earlingford and Felix, who, from above, had heard their voices, approaching to join them; and both started up and hastened towards her.

"You have been absent," said she, addressing Viola, "an incredible time, my dear child. How could you support the heat of such a day? I have never felt so oppressed, though sitting in the shadiest spot I could find, perfectly inactive."

Viola and Fitz Aymer, as she spoke, were struck by the languor of her countenance. They imputed it in some measure to the long abstinence she had endured, in consequence of their having delayed their return so much beyond the hour at which she was accustomed to take her noon-day meal; yet, it was evident, that indisposition had also some share in the alteration; and Viola, miserable at the thought, could not detach her eyes from her mother's face, nor forgive herself for having forsaken her during so many hours.

Fitz Aymer, eager as he was to prosecute the researches which he meditated, could not, however, till a much later period than he had intended, bear to quit the kind friend who, when he was himself a sufferer, had watched by him so assiduously. But when the freshness of the evening air began to produce a reviving

effect upon her, and he saw her resuming some portion of her habitual cheerfulness, he stole away, determined to employ every ray of remaining light in pursuing the investigation which he had so much at heart.

CHAP. IX.

Let not your ears despise this tongue for ever,
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound,
That ever yet they heard.

SHAKESPEAR.

The groan of grief, the shriek of pain,
Ring from the moonlight's grove of cane.

W. SCOTT.

VIOLA saw Fitz Aymer depart with feelings so different to those she would have experienced, had her mind been less occupied by inquietude for her mother, that she scarcely recollected the object he was going upon, and was almost wholly indifferent to its event. He returned no more till it was completely dark; his stay then was short, for he expressed an apprehension of detaining Lady Earlingford from repose; but his anxiety to hear how she found herself was as affectionate as ever; and as there appeared nothing unusual in his

manner, Viola concluded that his perquisitions had been fruitless, and dismissed the affair entirely from her mind.

But in the morning, long before his usual hour of appearing, he was, accompanied by Felix, at the entrance of the cave. Viola, much dejected, came forth to speak to him: "Lady Earlingford," said she, "has had a sleepless and most uneasy night, and I am really terrified at her looks!"

"I am truly concerned to hear it.—Is she unable to rise?"

"Heaven forbid!—No, she is up; but seems very feeble, and almost as much shaken as if she had been ill a week."

Fitz Aymer was silent a few moments, and then in a voice expressive of his reluctance to give her additional pain, said: "Do not hate me, Edmund, for bringing you unpleasant news at such a moment: but circumstances oblige me to be explicit, and I dare hazard no delay."

Viola, dismayed, entreated him, with trembling impatience, not to keep her in suspense an instant.

"I could have told you," resumed Fitz Aymer, "all that I am now come to

announce, last night: but tidings that are disagreeable, never make a more powerful impression upon the spirits than when communicated just before we lie down to rest. I therefore deferred speaking till the morning."

He then proceeded to inform her, that he had discovered the authors of their yesterday's surprise, and the proprietors of the gun which they had heard upon the cliff: "I had just parted from one of the persons in question," he added, "when I last night came back to the cave—and now, Edmund, forgive me for prefacing what I have further to say by these tedious circumlocutions; but the fact is, I am loath to come to the point; and anxious to prepare you as well as I am able for the comfortless information which it is necessary I should impart.—"

"Oh, speak, speak quickly!" cried Viola, "no reality can be so horrible as the conjectures this delay gives me time to form! Who are the beings to whom you allude? Are they Indians? Are they hostile and savage? Are they many in number?"

"No; there are two individuals only, a

father and son, and both Europeans; natives of France. The circumstances which I gathered from the youngest respecting their arrival hither, are briefly these: His father, he told me, was commander of a small privateer, in which, during nearly four months, he had scoured the Indian seas, made many valuable prizes, and rendered himself the terror of all trading vessels steering to or from any of the Asiatic settlements. With bitter imprecations, however, the son, who acted as second in command, proceeded to state, that a conspiracy had been formed against him and his father by their own crew; and, that a short time since, half a dozen of the most resolute of the mutineers fell upon them suddenly whilst pacing the deck, forced them over the side of the ship into a crazy boat, and then steered away in the privateer with all the sail they could set. The wretched pair, unprovided with compass or quadrant were likewise unfurnished with accommodations of any kind either for sleeping, or for warding off their exposure to the heats of the sun. Their whole stock of provisions

consisted of a scanty supply of salt meat, a small cask of rum, and a few gallons of fresh water."

"Poor souls!" exclaimed Viola—"how deplorable a situation!"

"Hard as their lot appears," resumed Fitz Aymer, "I can scarcely hesitate to believe that they had amply deserved it! When you have once seen them, you will cease to wonder at the hatred which must have instigated the crew to such outrageous insubordination. Two more flinty-hearted looking villains I never beheld! The father, still sullen and resentful, scowls from beneath a pair of bushy eye-brows with the ferocity of a tiger meditating to spring upon his prey; he growls, rather than speaks; and but that he appears ill, and I believe suffers from some acute internal malady, I should be tempted, so rancorous is his aspect, to shun him hereafter as the demon of the place!"

"But the son?" cried Viola, fearfully; "is there nothing less repulsive in *his* aspect?"

"The son looks more crafty, and aims at being more civilized: but the expression of

his eye denotes a fierce and remorseless ruffian, low bred, low born, and fitted for any atrocity. He is gifted with Stentorian lungs, and the athletic proportions of a gladiator. He presumes to speak of the past occupation which he and his father carried on, as having been authorized by government; and I have no means of disproving the assertion; yet, from many expressions which escaped him whilst, in his fury, inveighing against the mutineers; and, indeed, from the general deportment of both, which is decidedly that of the most unprincipled outlaws, I have scarcely a doubt that they were mere common pirates, plundering and robbing upon the high seas without regard to friend or enemy—their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them!"

"Oh, Fitz Aymer!" cried the terrified Viola, "you overrated my fortitude when you thought me sufficiently prepared to listen to this frightful account with composure! It shocks me beyond measure!—How—how shall we communicate it to my —to Lady Earlingford? I feel so agitated and confused, that I am as little capable of

breaking it to her with the caution which ought to be used, as Felix himself could be! Fitz Aymer—despise me not for the confession; but had you announced to me any other species of evil; had you told me that an earthquake was at hand; that the volcano menaced an eruption, or that an overwhelming hurricane was impending, I could have endured it better than the information that we are condemned to become the associates of worthless and abandoned men! Natural evils, as creatures of the dust, powerless to controul the elements, or elude the will of Heaven, we are bound to submit to patiently and humbly; but dangers or distresses inflicted by, or apprehended from the wickedness of human beings, I consider as the hardest of all others to be borne---the most depressing to the soul, and appalling to the imagination."

"My dear Edmund," cried Fitz Aymer, earnestly, "confide in the solemn promise which I here give you, to protect Lady Earlingford and yourself, from every species of insult or molestation at the hazard of my life! Nor will the task be so difficult as I have unwarily taught you to apprehend.

Both the intruders are unarmed; the father is too infirm for mischief; and in the event of any personal contest between me and the son, I have a presentiment that, in activity, address, and dispassionate presence of mind, he would be no match for me."

"How is it that you can call a man unarmed," said Viola, "who possesses a musket, and the means to load it?"

"When, as a signal favour, the gun was handed down to him in the boat, it was charged; but no second loading was given him: and yesterday, in shooting at some birds, he expended the only ammunition with which he was provided. He is likewise totally destitute of sabre, cutlass, or any other species of weapon."

"Yet—still you are single against two! The father may have more strength to do evil than you imagine."

Fitz Aymer smiled: "I assure you, Edmund, that he would not at present be more than equivalent to yourself in prowess! As a temporary relief perhaps to his sufferings, he swallows such copious draughts of rum, that though his temper may be inflamed by it, his strength is undoubtedly

diminished. His son complains that he derives no assistance from him in procuring the necessaries of life; for during the greater part of the day, he lies under a tree in a state of brutish stupefaction, and never till the coolness of the night comes on, gives himself the trouble of moving the length of his own shadow. *Then*, indeed, he makes up for previous supineness, and staggers whole hours about the beach, or roams over the hills, invoking curses upon his rebellious crew, howling with internal pain, or raving for more liquor. With all these demonstrations of fury, however, his nerves are so shaken, that a child might level him with the dust."

"How long have these hateful beings polluted this quiet place?"

"Two or three days at most. Their shattered and leaky bark was rather drifted to land by the tide, than guided by their own efforts; and now lies in a useless condition, hemmed in amongst the low rocks on the eastern shore of the island."

"Are they informed that you have any companions?"

"They have seen Felix: but I wholly

forbore mentioning either you or Lady Earlingford. I see no immediate occasion for proclaiming that you are here. Your cavern is secure from discovery; and all that you have to guard against is, the imprudence of shewing yourselves, or of letting your voices be overheard. Luckily, Felix can betray no secrets, for they are as ignorant of English as he is of French. The business of bringing provisions to your retreat must devolve upon me; and as affairs are now circumstanced, it will be the only business I shall prosecute with pleasure. These miscreants, Edmund, have made the place utterly loathsome to me: I was beginning to tolerate it with a degree of patience which I once thought it would be impossible I ever should attain."

"And I," thought Viola, "was beginning to love it in preference to any other spot under Heaven!" Then, turning from him to re-enter the cave, she said: "Come with me, Fitz Aymer, come with me, and aid me, prompt me in the task of revealing to Lady Earlingford the discovery which you have so unfortunately made. She is ill, and its effect upon her will, I fear, be

teri ble! You know not what she suffered when she first became aware of *your* residence on the island! Her consternation upon finding an arrow which you had accidentally shot in the direction of the place where we sat, I never shall recollect without shuddering."

"You must, however, endeavour to assume an air of calmness. The less disturbance she perceives in your aspect, or anxiety in mine, the less dismay she will herself experience. Recollect that we make the communication from no idle love of telling news, but to preserve her from the danger of unadvisably exposing herself to observation: be composed, therefore, and announce the intelligence in the least alarming manner possible."

Docile to his bidding, Viola smoothed her brow, though unable to conquer the disquiet of her heart, and slowly accompanied him into the cave.

Their joint precautions, and considerate endeavours to palliate the tidings which they were compelled to unfold, failed not entirely in producing the effect of inspiring Lady Earlingford with some appearance of

fortitude: but it was *only* with its appearance! The recital gave a blow to her existence as fatal as to her peace. She repressed, for their sakes, all exclamation, all outward shew of terror: she neither wept nor spoke: but fixing her eyes upon Viola with a look of indescribable anguish, she sat motionless as a statue; her hands clasped, and the expression of her countenance denoting the very agony of despair.

Fitz Aymer and Viola alternately gazed at her, and at each other, with awe-struck and profound emotion. The former discerned, or fancied that he discerned, in the eyes of his adopted parent, a wildness contrasting so horribly with the tranquillity which she struggled to maintain, that he scarcely knew how to flatter himself the blow would be otherwise than irrecoverable. Viola, too, observed in her aspect a foreboding gloominess that petrified her with fear: and but for the presence of Fitz Aymer, she could have thrown herself upon the earth, and wept, in bitterness of heart, at the anticipation of the dark and unexplained calamities which that aspect seemed to prognosticate.

He was the first who found courage to break the dreary silence. He sat down beside Lady Earlingford, and taking her hand with mingled respect and affection, said: "I cannot behold you thus overwhelmed, dear Madam, by the intelligence which it has been my painful office to announce, without finding myself oppressed by the feelings of an executioner! Shake off, I beseech you, this dreadful torpidity;—revive, look up, dearest Lady Earlingford, and assure yourself that the alarm which possesses you is equally premature and exaggerated. Remain patiently secluded within this asylum. It shall be my endeavour to occupy the two strangers in remote parts of the island. I have already offered my services to the son as an assistant in erecting a hut, and in repairing their damaged boat; and should this last attempt prove successful, I am not without hopes that his own impatience to quit a solitude which *he* finds as irksome as his company would be to *us*, will induce him to depart, at any risk, in search of some more populous region. Meanwhile, if Edmund, growing weary of constant confinement, chuses occasionally to emerge from

this cell, I will call him my brother, and under that title ensure to him such treatment as he ought to receive."

Roused by the suggestion of a scheme so remote from every wish of her heart, Lady Earlingford placed her hand impressively upon Fitz Aymer's arm, and exclaimed: "Never, never can I voluntarily consent to so pernicious an association! Oh, Fitz Aymer! preserve the mind of your innocent young friend from the contamination to which it would be exposed by an intercourse with such depraved and vicious beings! A degree of respect is due to the extreme youth of Edmund, as sacred as that which a pure and virtuous female might challenge; and I make it my most solemn request, that you will never discard this reflection from your mind."

Struck by the tone in which this injunction was given, Fitz Aymer promised a religious observance of its import; and soon after quitted the cave, which, he said, it might be prudent not to re-visit again till the approach of night, lest he should render himself liable to the danger of incurring observation.

Felix was left behind, strictly charged to forbear all noise, and to submit tractably to the necessity of being debarred from his usual portion of exercise.

Lady Earlingford, after the departure of him whom she was now compelled to regard as a protector, remained as one stunned, and half annihilated by a deadly blow. The image was perpetually before her of Viola, (her disguise suspected, or discovered) exposed to insult and outrage from the dreaded beings whose arrival she so bitterly deplored. Whilst Fitz Aymer had been present, she had exerted herself to speak with coherency, and to listen without utter preoccupation: but when all stimulous to effort was gone; when the eye that had at least checked, if not conquered her despondency, was withdrawn, she never moved except to wipe from her face the tears which incessantly bathed it;—she trembled at the slightest noise, and, at intervals, grasping the hand of her sorrowing daughter with almost convulsive eagerness, she pronounced a few low and indistinct sentences, too broken and unconnected to be clearly un-

derstood—almost too hollow-toned to resemble human accents.

Nearly the whole day was thus cruelly passed: a day which cost the affectionate and affrighted Viola almost as many tears as were shed by her heart-struck mother. Felix, meanwhile, was with the greatest difficulty withheld from issuing forth in pursuit of Fitz Aymer. The sight of Lady Earlingford's fixed and motionless distress; the vacant glance which she sometimes cast upon him; the mixture of alarm and grief depicted upon the countenance of Viola; and the natural antipathy to silence and confinement common to all children, rendered him so refractory and discontented, that scarcely any consideration would have induced Viola to prolong his penance, short of that which now rendered it indispensable to their security from detection.

In addition to the mental sufferings of this tedious and heavy day, they were condemned to the endurance of a degree of heat which the previous temperature of the island had not by any means prepared them to experience. There was no sun—

but a moist and relaxing sultriness pervaded the air, beyond description oppressive: the sides of the cavern were dripping with unwholesome vapours; every thing with which their hands came in contact felt clammy, yet burning; it grew almost an effort to breathe; and Lady Earlingford, already ill, and now shattered by terrible anxiety, was so much debilitated by an atmosphere thus loaded, that she lost all power to sit up, and was compelled to throw herself, panting and flushed, upon her withered couch. Viola, also, though in the vigour of health, felt the influence most painfully of such suffocating closeness: even at the mouth of the cave, not a breeze was stirring capable of fanning a feather; a sort of portentous stillness reigned all around, indescribably awful; the sea itself was so glassy, as to look wholly stagnant; and one unbroken mass of clouds, heavy, dense, and immoveable, obscured the heavens, and spread their own dull and sullen hue over earth and water. The very food which she attempted to swallow appeared spiritless, tepid, and unrefreshing; her limbs seemed sinking under her; and ere

the return of Fitz Aymer, casting herself in imitation of the weary Felix, upon the ground, she rested her throbbing temples upon the foot of Lady Earlingford's bed, and though not inclined to sleep, closed her eyes, as if glad to shut out from their view the gloom that was diffused around.

It was nearly dark, when, at length hearing Fitz Aymer's voice, and guided by its sound, she started up, and went forward to meet him. He seemed languid, and nearly as dispirited as herself; and his first words were: "How shall we live, my dear Edmund, if this intolerable heat continues? I have hardly strength to support my own weight! How have you all borne it? How is Lady Earlingford?"

Viola, taking his hand, led him towards her, saying: "Speak to her, Fitz Aymer; endeavour to cheer her! She has scarcely unclosed her lips the whole day. Can you give her no comfort? Can you say nothing to her that may calm or encourage her?"

Fitz Aymer sighed: but waving the subject, he said: "Why are you without a light? I have brought a supply of fresh fruit, some of whichmight cool and revive

her; but you keep her in such darkness that I know not how to give it to her."

Viola instantly sought for their lamp, and bringing it to him as soon as she had made it burn, he knelt down by the side of her mother, and was beginning to speak, when the light flashing upon her countenance, disclosed to him a complexion so ghastly, and features so utterly deprived of animation, that starting, and thrown off his guard, he exclaimed:

"Oh, Edmund!—She is dying!"

A tremour seized the horror-struck Viola that shook her whole frame: almost dying herself, she fell speechless upon the side of the bed, and lay extended like one suddenly struck down by a flash of lightning.

Bitterly reproaching himself for his want of caution, Fitz Aymer raised, and carried her out upon the terrace; brought her water, and used every means in his power to restore her suspended animation. It was long ere she recovered sufficiently to be able to speak: but when her perceptions were fully returned, her first wish was to go back to her mother. Fitz Aymer supported her yet tottering steps, and with feelings

nearly as solemn as her own, approached the sufferer's couch.

Both now knelt, and gently united in raising her: Viola then applied to her parched mouth a beverage prepared from the cooling juice of the lime, some portion of which she saw, with renovated hope, that Lady Earlingford made a successful attempt to swallow.—Shortly after, she gained, though faintly, the power of speech:—"Fitz Aymer," said she, gasping for breath, "I feel that I am dying!—terror has completed what disease had begun—I am dying—and this unhappy child will, ere long, have no friend, no protector upon earth save yourself!—Will you be faithful to the trust?—Will you, now, at this awful moment, and in the presence of that God I have so lately seen you worship,---will you give me your sacred word of honour---your word as a christian,---as a being assured of an hereafter, and conscious of his own responsibility, ---to guard, sustain, and be the righteous defender of this innocent and ill-fated creature?"

Viola, almost suffocated by her sobs, seized one of her mother's hands, and

covering it with kisses and with tears, found it difficult to refrain from giving vent to the most piercing cries of anguish and despair.

Fitz Aymer, meanwhile, too fatally certain that Lady Earlingford spoke prophetically of her own approaching end, and eager to give her every assurance that could contribute to sooth her feelings, bound himself in the strongest terms he could devise, to fulfil in all respects the charge which she had imposed upon him. His energy both of looks and voice, and the undissembled sorrow which she saw in his countenance, affected her profoundly. She feebly pressed his hand;---a tear glistened in her dim eye;---and after a moment's hesitation: "You have shewn yourself," said she, "on every occasion, since we met in this desert, a better man than the world reports you.---We owe you much, Fitz Aymer;---above all, *I* owe you the justice of acknowledging that my prejudices against you are done away;---that I believe you to be honourable, sincere, and capable of much right feeling.---This conviction encourages, and the urgency of the moment, compels me, to lay open to you my whole heart. The

period for concealment is past;—you must now be told all,—you must now be told that the helpless being whom I have confided to your honour,—whom with my dying breath I bequeath to your guardianship, is—my daughter!"

Starting from his kneeling posture,—half incredulous, and, at such an instant, half reluctant to believe what, but the preceding day, he would have heard with transport,—Fitz Aymer gazed at the shrinking girl in wild and speechless amazement. He saw *a thousand blushing apparitions start into her face;*---he saw an air of sensitive and retiring modesty in her countenance, that struck conviction to his heart, and addressing her with the deepest emotion, he exclaimed: "Is it indeed *Viola* I behold!---She, who, but so short a time since, was in possession of every blessing which the world has to bestow!---She who was so loved, so admired!---whose opening prospects were so brilliant!---and now---poor, poor Viola!---could you but read my heart, what unutterable pity would you find impressed upon it!"

He stopped, too much affected to be able to proceed; but presently, recovering more

firmness: "I here swear," resumed he, solemnly taking her hand, and looking upwards as he spoke---"I here swear by all my hopes of Heaven, to be to you a faithful and devoted brother!---to respect you with inviolable sanctity, and to preserve you, whilst I have life, from every evil which human vigilance can avert!"

What were the feelings of Viola whilst listening to this speech?---Each word sunk into her heart, and penetrated it with the softest gratitude;---she extended to him her hand, and regarding him through her tears with looks of kindness and implicit reliance, said: "These soothing assurances, generous Fitz Aymer, are such precisely as I should have expected from you;---and when, alas! could they have been more seasonably given!"

Lady Earlingford, feeble as she was, drew her daughter nearer, and imprinted a tender kiss upon her cheek: then, raising her glazed and heavy eye towards Fitz Aymer: "To me," cried she, "another sun will not arise!---to this angel, its return will bring only anguish and desolation.---Bear with the vehemence of her first grief, Fitz

Aymer:----console, support her; speak peace to her distracted heart;---and, I adjure you! expose her not (if to avoid such an evil be possible) to the gaze of the lawless wretches who now infest this island!"

"Can you believe such a caution necessary, dearest Lady Earlingford? Even as *Edmund* I shrunk from the idea of exposing her to their observation:---as *Viola*, they shall gain access to her, only by forcing themselves a passage hither over my mangled body!"

"Where have you left them?"

"In order, as much as possible, to keep them aloof from hence, I compelled myself to make them an offer of sharing my cabin, till the construction of the one which they meditate is completed.---They are both gone to rest."

Calmed by this intelligence, Lady Earlingford gently withdrew herself from Viola's support, and expressed a wish again to lie down. During nearly an hour, she remained perfectly still, except that at intervals her hands were slightly convulsed, and her lips moved, as if in inward prayer:---but her respiration, denoting the most painful

tightness, was drawn with a degree of effort which seemed to threaten that every breath would be her last. Viola, trembling at these symptoms, withdrew not her eyes an instant from her face; whilst Fitz Aymer, sighing at the impending catastrophe, of which every fresh observation confirmed the danger, paced slowly up and down the cave; stopping occasionally to contemplate with sorrowing looks the almost cadaverous countenance of the mother,---or to whisper to the heart-breaking daughter a few words of deep and unfeigned commiseration.

At length the weak accents of that voice they dreaded, ere long, never to hear again, reached their attentive ears. Viola bent down her head, and suspending her own breath while she listened, heard her mother ask to be once more assisted in sitting up. Fitz Aymer instantly approached to give his aid; and Lady Earlingford then, with a faint and temporary renewal of strength, said, "I would fain try,---I would fain, my Viola, ere these eyes are closed for ever, employ them for the last time in addressing to your father a few momentous lines. On the success of this attempt, your fate, dearest

child, may rest.---Pray for me, then;---pray that I may have the ability to execute the purpose I have so much at heart!---We are not without the means of writing;---give me paper, give me whatever is needful, and hold me up whilst I make the effort."

She was obeyed in every particular; Fitz Aymer retreating whilst with shaking and unsteady fingers she slowly wrote; and Viola turning aside her head, that she might be equally guiltless of overlooking the blotted and irregular lines. When, at last, her task was accomplished, Lady Earlingford delivered the paper, folded, but unsealed, into her daughter's hands. "Should you," said she, "be so blessed as hereafter to find yourself restored to your surviving parent, give him this writing;---tell him that it was my final---my dying act!---Confirm to him the assurance which it contains that I considered it as a testimentary declaration of my last wishes.---Read it, however, yourself, beloved girl, ere you present it to him; and if it contains one sentence which you *then* would wish to erase, destroy it;---its design would be annulled."

By her looks only could Viola promise

obedience; her voice was impeded by sighs and tears. Lady Earlingford, though nearly exhausted by the exertion she had been making, beckoned Fitz Aymer to approach, and struggling for power to be heard, said: "This grieving girl is in no state to undertake the task: but will you, dear Fitz Aymer, be her substitute? Will you read prayers by me?—They would strengthen and compose us *all*, and to *me* they would be the best preparation for the awful change which I am about to experience."

Fitz Aymer brought the book, and summoning all his firmness, began, in a subdued but unfaltering voice, the sacred service. Scarcely, however, had he pronounced three sentences, when a strange inexplicable noise, loud, though not very near, disturbed the solemnity in which they were engaged, and interrupted the death-like stillness of the night. Parent and child both started, and each, with a hand fast locked in that of the other, awaited in breathless dismay the event of so extraordinary and unseasonable a rumour. In a few seconds, the sound recurred, and never was yell more

piercing or discordant heard: a criminal, stretched upon the rack, could not have sent forth groans and alternate shrieks of greater torment. At times, the distracting outcry remained stationary; then, seeming to retreat, it gradually subsided, and, for awhile, was wholly discontinued: but beginning again, the next minute, with aggravated fury, the air resounded with the fiendish clamour, and the hearts of the two panic-struck females died within them.

Fitz Aymer, who, perfectly sensible of its source, had at the very beginning of the frantic vociferation rushed towards the exterior of the cave, now returned, and observing the alarm it had created, hastened to explain its origin: "These outrageous screams," cried he, "the joint effects of intoxication and bodily pain, proceed from the elder of the two Frenchmen. He wanders thus during the greater part of every night; and the instant I heard him, I was so well aware who was approaching, that being bent upon preventing every chance of his intrusion hither, I stationed myself on the platform to watch his movements. He passed the foot

of the rock, but made no effort to ascend, and is now pursuing his mad ramble in a wholly different direction."

Lady Earlingford heard him not.—Every new emotion in her present critical state, was calculated to produce fatal consequences. Before the return of Fitz Aymer, she had become senseless; and after a succession of fainting fits, in the intervals of which she neither recovered the power of speech, nor any apparent consciousness of the objects around her, she expired at dawn of day, without a struggle, and without a sigh!

CHAP. X.

———Like some
Celestial delegate from Heaven,
Arm'd in the strength of virtue, with a glance
'Severe in youthful bounty,' she o'erawes
The aim of guilt, and makes it quail beneath
Her calm, collected eye.

A CALAMITY so sudden, a loss so grievous and irremediable, not only overwhelmed the faculties of the unhappy Viola, but seemed for awhile to petrify and subdue the firmer mind of Fitz Aymer. Yet, now was the moment that called imperiously for all the exertions which gratitude to the memory of the deceased, and sympathy for her wretched survivor, could dictate. Viola left an orphan, and committed solely to his care—Viola, half expiring with grief—bereaved of every tie—mourning over the remains of her only natural friend—Viola thus circumstanced, was an object to him of such tender compassion,

such boundless interest, that no parent, trembling for the life of an adored child, could have witnessed the pungency of her sorrow with more terror of its effect upon her mind and frame. That sorrow, ' not loud, but deep,' was of a character to penetrate his very soul.—Extended beside the breathless body; her arms twined round it, her face deluged with tears, her chest heaving with sobs—no articulate sentence escaped her, save, that, now and then, the word " *Mother*," murmured in the most plaintive accents, stole through her pale lips. She sometimes, with more impetuous anguish, half arose, and bending over the lifeless form, gazed upon it wildly; touched its hands, its cheeks—listened to hear it breathe---and when every hope again forsook her, looked up through her tears, with appealing eyes, to Heaven, and sunk once more beside the corse.

Fitz Aymer, during many hours, never left the poor mourner, never withdrew from her his considerate attention a moment. Felix, meanwhile, unconscious of the sad event of the night, awoke at his usual time; and surveying, first, the ghastly form near

which he had been sleeping, and then the anguished countenance of Viola, a sentiment of undefinable terror seized him, and pale, wondering, and scared, he crept to the friend under whose protection he was always secure of comfort, and insinuating himself within his arms, there felt restored again to confidence and serenity.

An acuteness of affliction such as Viola experienced, could not be so long sustained, without producing, as Fitz Aymer had dreaded, injurious effects upon her health. Weakened, shivering—her cheeks now glowing with unnatural brilliancy, now exhibiting the wan hue of approaching illness, she awakened in him so much alarm, that discarding all scruples of breaking in upon her grief, he hastily deposited Felix upon the ground, snatched her up in his arms, and without giving her time to expostulate, bore her to the entrance of the cave. There, placing her upon the turf, he adjured her not to abandon herself to such unavailing, such unresisted distress;—he told her, that upon her life his every chance of happiness depended; he reminded her of the recent consent she had given to accept his pro-

tection and friendship; and then added: "Is it by yielding yourself a prey to despondency and death, dear Viola, that you would prove to me the sincerity of your professed reliance on that friendship? Ah, no! live to bear testimony to your surviving kindred, that I have been a faithful executor of your mother's latest wishes;—live to justify her confidence in my promises; live to assuage, since, alas! you are doomed to partake, the discomforts of my adverse lot. Who have we now left to expect counsel, pity, consolation from, but each other? We must participate in every sorrow, and reciprocate every alleviation.—Speak to me, Viola! Your silence is unkind; it throws me to an unmerited distance from you and your concerns! Ah, can you doubt the genuine, the fervent share I take in your just affliction!"

At first, Viola, her head beating with intolerable pain, her senses giddy and confused, listened to him with no apparent consciousness of what she heard: but by degrees, the agitation with which he spoke awakened her attention, and the kindness of his lan-

guage forced its way to the feeling and trusting heart it was so well calculated to touch. Tears of less agony than those which she had hitherto shed, strayed gently down her cheeks; she rested her aching forehead upon his shoulder, and felt, even in that early stage of her unhappiness, the inestimable value of a soother in the hour of misfortune: "Fitz Aymer," she softly cried, "have patience with me!—Allow for the helpless sadness of one whose mind seems reduced to a state of gloomy vacuity; who dares not yet contemplate with steadiness the magnitude of her calamity.—I am not insensible of your sympathy, neither will I be deaf to your friendly exhortations. I will do my utmost to submit as I ought to this dreadful infliction;—I will pray for fortitude—I will look up to Heaven for support:—but, oh! Fitz Aymer—you must give me time!—you must be indulgent to me in this first hour of dismay!—I cannot yet—indeed I cannot, shew the resignation you would urge!" As she spoke, a fresh burst of sorrow overcame her, and for some minutes a mournful and

mutual silence prevailed, interrupted only by the deep sighs that tore her bosom, and were echoed by her grieving companion.

After awhile, regaining more composure: "Many," cried she, "have known the species of sorrow I endure, but who has ever known it under circumstances so disastrous? Many have lost a parent, but who ever experienced the aggravations of such a loss which I am sentenced to suffer? I need not to you, Fitz Aymer, point out their singular wretchedness:—you feel for the cruelty of my situation, and must be aware of all its accompanying evils; yet, whilst I had a mother—and *such* a mother!—even in this desert, I never knew a fear which she had not the kind art of appeasing: in her vigilance I placed my trust; to her foresight I committed my security; to her direction consigned my actions:—she felt for me, if but a passing breeze blew on my cheek too roughly; she mourned for me, if but a dream disturbed the calmness of my slumber; she trembled for me, if but for an hour she missed me from her guardian presence!—and shall not *I*, from

whom she is now separated for ever—shall not I weep, mourn, lament for *her!*"

"Your tears, dear Viola," cried Fitz Aymer, deeply affected by these fond complaints, "are but too natural, and Heaven forbid that I should censure the tenderness which causes them to flow. It was the mute, the uncommunicated anguish, preying upon your closed-up heart, that shocked, that disturbed me so acutely. Half a day longer spent in such speechless agony would have destroyed you. Do but talk to me of your regret—do but admit me to share in your filial grief, and I will complain no more. She whom you lament—did she not, when I was disabled and suffering, treat me as a son? Did she not forego her rest to attend upon me? Did she not heal me by her care, and revive me by her kindness? And are these, proofs of benevolence which I can ever forget? No; I loved her, I honoured her as if she had given me birth:—it will at all times be a gratification to me, though a mournful one, to speak of her; to hear you record her virtues, and proclaim the fondness which she so deservedly inspired."

The unwelcome sound of a loud and harsh voice, impatiently reiterating the name of Fitz Aymer, here broke in upon their melancholy conference, and drove Viola fearfully back into the cave.

"I must, alas!" said her reluctant companion, "quit you for a short time. The voice is that of the junior Frenchman, whom, last night, little foreseeing the intervening misfortune that awaited us, I promised to accompany to-day to the rocks amongst which his boat is wedged. He wishes me to examine its condition, and to assist in deciding upon the practicability of putting it in repair. He is contentious, and, entirely to disappoint him, might occasion between us an open breach; or, which would be worse, might so sharpen his curiosity, that in exploring every nook to discover me, he would at last come upon us unawares in this retreat."

"Oh, then, go," cried Viola, changing colour at the thought; "go to him without further delay! I know—I feel persuaded, that you will not remain absent longer than prudence renders absolutely necessary."

"Ah, rest assured, most dear Viola, that

the instant I can leave him without awakening suspicion, I shall fly back to the spot where all my wishes centre! It grieves me to lose sight of you, at such a period, even for an instant:—but what remedy have I?"

"None, none! You must go, nor am I so unreasonable as to wish to detain you."

Fitz Aymer then unwillingly compelled himself to depart.

Left now alone, with the sad spectacle before her of her mother's pale remains, (for Felix had accompanied his friend) Viola's feelings were so complicated, her amazement at her own orphan state was so extreme—the recollection of Lady Earlingford in full vigour and animation was so freshly present to her memory, that her grief, her horror, were almost suspended by wonder how such a speedy reverse could be possible! Had she not, but a few hours before, felt the pressure of the hand now rigidly immoveable? Had she not seen the eye, now closed in death, then turned upon her with even an augmentation of its accustomed tenderness? Did not the impression of those livid lips still seem warm upon her

cheek? And so suddenly, so dreadfully, was every function of vitality at an end? "Oh, my mother!" she exclaimed, "can I bear thus to lose you? You, whose indulgent attachment—whose gentle firmness, rendered you, alike in joy or in sorrow, the object towards whom my heart invariably turned! With all a parent's authority, you had all the endearing kindness of a friend: you were formed to encourage confidence, as much as to secure respect. I never disguised from you a thought of my heart; and so mild, so tolerant did I uniformly find you, that though I derived instruction from your counsels, I never experienced embarrassment from your rigour. Who will love me, my excellent mother! as *you* have loved me? Your's was a tenderness so unalterable, so disinterested, so indissolubly interwoven with your own existence, that nothing could have shaken it. In sickness, in the most abject circumstances, nay, even in disgrace, you, my mother, would have cherished, sustained, and—pardoned me! Oh, in this hour of terrible anguish," continued she, dropping on her knees, "how fearful to me is the remem-

brance of every duty I omitted to perform; ---of every injunction I failed to obey;---of every sacrifice I neglected to acknowledge! ---Look down upon me, O my sainted mother! with forgiveness.---Faultless yourself, you merited a more faultless daughter!"

Had Fitz Aymer---had any one who ever knew her in her filial character, heard these harassing self-reproaches, how superfluous would they have deemed them! But in moments of intense and recent affliction, the conscience is even morbidly tender; it construes the slightest errors into crimes, and dwells upon the virtues of a departed friend, till every thing that, in the survivor, came short of the same excellence, assumes the aspect of wilful guilt:---a thousand merits not duly valued, a thousand obligations unrequited, recur to the memory; "and we wish, vainly wish, for that friend's return, not so much that we may receive, as that we may bestow happiness, and recompense that kindness which before glided from our minds without impression."*

Whilst by these too scrupulous regrets

* Johnson.

poor Viola was heightening the misery that already oppressed her, she suddenly started, ---listened---and fancied that, borne upon the breeze, she could hear the distant voice of altercation. A few instants served to convince her that it was no delusion: the sounds became more distinct: they proceeded from the beach, and Fitz Aymer, she became assured, was a party in the contest. All the blood in her veins rushed to her heart, which throbbed so tumultuously, that it seemed bursting from her bosom. She crept, scarcely knowing what she did, to the outlet of the cave; listened again,---advanced insensibly to the edge of the terrace, and casting down from it an apprehensive look, descried, upon the sands below, a sight which, at the first glance, almost exterminated her!---Fitz Aymer, wrestling with a man of gigantic stature, and apparently in momentary danger of being overpowered, was, to complete her horror, menaced with treachery from a second enemy; who, seeking to approach him unobserved, and armed with a sort of bludgeon, was cautiously advancing in his rear. This was the elder Frenchman; the

vile father of as vile a son. A scene fraught with such imminent peril to her only friend, produced upon Viola an effect almost supernatural. In a moment it braced her nerves, dispelled all personal timidity, and endowed her with the energy of desperation. Quick as thought, she darted back into the cave, ---seized one of the pistols which had been found in the chest, and which she well remembered that Fitz Aymer had cleaned and loaded but a few days before,---flew, swifter than lightning, down the steep rock, and just as the old man had drawn near enough to strike his meditated victim,--- just as Fitz Aymer, panting, and nearly exhausted, seemed sinking under the efforts of his Herculean adversary,---stood, like a guardian angel, at his side; and, placing the pistol within his grasp, dauntlessly cried: "Defend your life, Fitz Aymer!---A fiend lurks behind you!----Save----defend your life!"

The uplifted bludgeon fell from the old man's hand, who, ruffian as he was, beheld so unexpected an apparition with astonishment amounting nearly to superstitious awe. The son, seeing his antagonist armed,

all at once, in so formidable a manner, discontinued the unequal combat; and retreating slowly and sullenly, glared upon Viola as he passed with all the rancour of baffled villany,—Viola neither marked, nor now any longer thought of him. Enraptured by the swift cessation of hostility which her well-timed interference had occasioned, she addressed to Heaven a fervent ejaculation of thanks,—and turning from the spot, was meditating to regain her sanctuary, when Fitz Aymer, whom admiration of her courage, amazement at her presence, and a thousand indefinable emotions of gratitude and sensibility, had hitherto held immoveable, flew impetuously after her: "My preserver! my benefactress!" he cried. "Oh, how shall I find language to express half I feel! —Generous Viola! for me, what have you not braved!—Your abhorrence of these men, —your terror of detection,—your habitual timidity,—how nobly have you surmounted them all!—Oh, may I but, at some future day, have the ability to *prove* the deep sense I entertain of the obligation you have conferred upon me!"

The stimulous withdrawn which had lent

to Viola such unaccustomed power of exertion, her spirits sunk in proportion to the vehemence with which they had been agitated. She sat down on a low bank near the late scene of contention, and, relapsing into all her wonted timorousness, dejectedly said: "Ah, Fitz Aymer, do not magnify an act of sudden and resistless impulse into a deed of deliberate resolution! —I saw the hand of an assassin suspended over you,—and I rushed instinctively to save you:—but I am a very coward at heart!—The ferocity of these monsters makes me tremble; and voluntarily to face them again, would, I believe, surpass my utmost fortitude.—Oh, never, never let them find you unarmed! Wear one or both of these pistols constantly about you.—We are beset here by murderers, and your life is only safe whilst you are known to have at hand the means of overawing their practised villany.----But where is poor Felix?"

"He must have passed you as you came down from the cavern. My quarrel with the young Frenchman originated, in some measure, on his account; and when my

opponent and I came to action, I charged the terrified boy to take refuge with you. We will now, dearest Viola, go in quest of him; and as we proceed, I will relate to you the rise and progress of the late affray. Lean upon me, my sister; you are faint, and seem scarcely able to stand;---lean upon the arm, which, but for you, would, ere now, have been levelled with the dust."

Viola accepted the welcome support; and, whilst ascending slowly the path which with such velocity she had recently ran down, Fitz Aymer recounted to her the following particulars.

"When I joined," said he, "after compelling myself to part from you, this insolent Lamotte, the reception which he gave me was as coarse as it was unprovoked. Impatient of solitude, (that I can forgive!) and encroachingly eager to avail himself of my promised assistance in regard to the boat, he took the unlicensed freedom of reproaching me in a very high tone for my long defection, and, as he was pleased to say, evident intention of evading the engagement into which I had entered. I am not very tolerant of vulgar presumption: but

wishing, on many accounts, to avoid a dispute with this man, I told him, without any visible signs of anger, that I had been attending upon a sick friend; and that, under such circumstances, the remembrance of the boat had escaped me. Incredulous, or affecting to appear so, he sneeringly demanded where this invisible friend had sprung from?—I now began to lose my compulsory forbearance, and answered indignantly: 'I shall attend to no interrogations addressed to me with such arrogance. We are wholly independent of each other; and after such a specimen of your exacting and troublesome disposition, I think myself fully justified in withdrawing from you all hope of any future service. You may, if you choose it, take possession, with your diseased father, of my cabin, and the few accommodations which it contains: but my linen, tools, and whatever other effects I may think it worth while to retain, I shall remove at my leisure:—henceforward, our property and interests must be as distinct as our character and manners.'

"The miscreant," continued Fitz Aymer, "blustered and hectored most outrageously

on hearing this declaration: but, fixing upon him a stern and steady eye, I bade defiance to his threats, and taking Felix by the hand, was preparing to depart. At that moment, the vindictive brute, roughly, and with a look of malice, seized upon the affrighted boy, and swore that he would never release him till I had retracted every word I had spoken. This was not to be borne!—I lost all temper, and aimed at him a furious blow:---of course it was instantly returned; and the conflict which you witnessed, and so seasonably terminated, ensued."

"And now," cried the foreboding Viola, "having thrown aside the mask, and being at declared enmity with you, what atrocity may he not, either by force or fraud, endeavour to perpetrate against you!---Oh, be wary, be circumspect, Fitz Aymer!---Let me not," she tremulously added, "be deprived also of *you!*"

"I will act, move, speak," cried Fitz Aymer, "but by your direction!----You shall be the sole guide of my conduct. The dread of leaving you without a friend, ---of leaving you in the power of such unprincipled vagabonds, will make of me the

most cautious, the most guarded of men. Tranquillise yourself, dear Viola: the evil which I most fear, is that of seeing you sink under the accumulation of so much wretchedness and terror."

"Whilst you remain with me," answered she, "I may struggle to support existence:---should I lose you, short, I trust, would be the period of my prolonged sufferings!---On your life, Fitz Aymer, mine must henceforth depend;---and to know, to feel, that I should be unable to survive you, is the only consolation now remaining to me!"

Fitz Aymer knew too well how momentous were the reasons that necessarily induced her to think his life so important; and felt no vanity from a declaration which, under other circumstances, might have flattered him so highly:---"It is too true," cried he; "we must, indeed, live or die together! You cannot---neither have I the courage to wish that, in this spot, you should survive me."

"Short as my career has been," resumed Viola, "I have already endured much---drank deeply of the cup of adversity: but hitherto I have always been supported by

the presence of some being in whom I could place confidence. On arriving here, the association of my dearest mother to my mournful destiny, bereft it of half its bitterness; and not only gave me strength to live, but even gave, at intervals, a charm to life. Such now,—why should I hesitate to confess it—such now is the influence which your kindness, your brotherly sympathy, produces upon my mind. You cannot replace the incomparable friend I have lost;—at least you can never dislodge her from my heart:—but your participation in my sorrow;—your benevolent concern for a fate to which your own bears but too great a resemblance, and the certainty of possessing in you a zealous protector, gift me with resolution to contemplate without despair every danger but that of being bereaved of your support."

The unsuspecting reliance, the 'plain and holy innocence' of this language, touched Fitz Aymer very sensibly, and bound him more firmly than ever to her service. Where no distrust was entertained, it would have been superfluous to pour forth professions: but he internally renewed the oath he had

sworn to this lovely creature's mother,---the oath of being just and faithful in the discharge of his guardian office.

Being now arrived at the entrance of the cavern, they called anxiously upon the name of Felix. The poor child, scarcely yet recovered from the terror which the violence of the Frenchman had caused him, sat dejected and half concealed amongst the branches of a drooping shrub growing upon the platform. Fitz Aymer drew him from his leafy retreat, rejoicing to have found him, and easily conjecturing that he had been induced to prefer it to the cave, on account of the mute and motionless tenant, who there inspired him with such inexplicable awe.

CHAP. XI.

O Gods! who is't can say, *I'm at the worst?*

SHAKESPEAR.

She neither weeps,
Nor sighs, nor groans; too strong her agony
For outward sign of anguish, and for prayer
Too hopeless was the ill.

SOUTHEY.

VIOLA, at night, retired with Felix into the inner recess of the cavern; and, worn out by fatigue and sorrow, obtained, notwithstanding her melancholy vicinity to the death-bed of her mother, a few hours reprieve from suffering. Fitz Aymer threw himself down on a fresh heap of grass and leaves, in the outward cave. His pistols were deposited beside him; and he well knew that his sleep was so light, it would be impossible that any intruder should steal upon him as he lay, without awaking him in time to start up and stand on his defence. Nothing, however, but the sound of distant

thunder, and the descent of torrents of rain, disturbed the tranquillity of the night. These, Fitz Aymer had anticipated would be the inevitable consequences of the insupportable heat which, during the two preceding days, had prevailed.

In the morning, after Viola had risen, and kindly though mournfully greeted him, he went for a few moments to contemplate with reverence the inanimate features of his departed friend. The instant he cast his eye upon them, he was forcibly struck by the imperious necessity there seemed already to have arisen of consigning the honoured remains, with as little delay as possible, to their parent earth. He was silent to Viola upon a subject which he was well aware it would be agony to her to hear mentioned: but as soon as without manifest abruptness he could leave her, he went forth, followed by Felix, to fix upon some secluded and appropriate spot where he might begin the sad task of digging a grave.

The situation which he chose, elevated, yet screened on three sides by surrounding rocks, was a patch of verdure, facing the

sea, and decorated with one of the finest trees which the island produced. It was a banyan,* or Indian fig-tree, under whose impenetrable shade a patriarchal tribe might have found shelter. The mouldering form of *one* individual required not so ample a canopy: but Fitz Aymer selected it, because it had been an object of frequent admiration to the deceased; and because, though not within view, it was near the cavern.

---

* One of the latest and most descriptive accounts of this magnificent tree, is to be found in Percival's History of Ceylon.—"It grows," he says, "to an immense size, but bears neither blossom nor fruit. After rising to a great height, its branches drop downwards, and from their extremities shoot forth a number of roots which hang suspended like icicles, till at length they fasten themselves in the earth. From these roots new shoots spring up, which in their turn become trees, and thus a whole grove is produced from one original stock. The arches formed by the numerously interwoven branches and shoots, in time acquire the appearance of grottos and excavations. It is common for the Indians to take up their abode under these shades, and to remain stretched at their ease, while every thing exposed to the rays of the sun is scorched with intolerable heat."

The rudely-constructed and imperfect tools with which he had furnished Viola to facilitate her gardening labours, served him on this grievous occasion to break open the earth, and prepare it for the reception of the lamented relics it was about to cover. His toil was rendered painful by the reflections which accompanied it; and before he had accomplished half the undertaking, Felix, who had found amusement in running to and fro under the arches of the tree, occasionally extending his course to the outside of the verdant labyrinth, flew eagerly back to him, exclaiming, as he pointed towards the sea: "O, do go and look what a nice boat there is upon the water!"

The spade he held dropped from Fitz Aymer's hand, and rushing forward—his eyes were blessed, his senses almost maddened with sudden joy, on beholding a European vessel, gliding majestically upon the waves, at the distance of about three quarters of a mile from the shore!—Without an instant's delay, he darted down the rocks towards the beach! and Felix, aware that something extraordinary was the matter, impetuously followed.

Viola, meanwhile, unconscious of what was passing, maintained her sad and solitary station in the cavern. Fitz Aymer, she concluded, had repaired to the hut, as he had told her overnight he purposed doing, to fetch away from it whatever effects he was disinclined to leave in the possession of its new occupiers. He was armed, and she therefore felt no anxiety for his safety; yet his absence was in itself an aggravation of her melancholy; and as its duration encreased, she grew seriously appehensive of some renewed contest with the hated strangers. This painful idea led her to the platform, to explore the whole range of coast discoverable from its elevated site. Eagerly as she gazed, intently as she listened, she neither saw nor heard any thing to confirm her fears: but she beheld a sky lowering, and hazy; she observed the sea-birds flying to land for shelter: and the hollow roar of the waves, though as yet there was but little wind, announced an approaching storm. The view of the ocean thus perturbed was to Viola the most distressing which she could have witnessed. Here were all the presages which had forerun

her own memorable shipwreck: the same sounds in the air—the same gloominess of atmosphere, and the same appearances of mist spread over the whole surface of the deep. She could bear to contemplate it but a moment; the sight chilled her, and she turned back into the cave.

But there, inactive and alone, she found it impossible long to continue. The recollection struck her, that from the eminence on which grew the magnificent banyan tree, a prospect of the coast wholly different from that visible on their terrace was to be discerned. Thither she determined to go.

As she approached the well-known spot, she beheld with profound emotion, and an instantaneous consciousness of its design, the vestiges of Fitz Aymer's unfinished labour. The dimensions of a grave—could she doubt *whose* grave?—were distinctly marked out, and its excavation begun: "Oh, why this dreadful haste!" she cried, as with streaming eyes she surveyed the melancholy preparations. "Why so impatient, Fitz Aymer, to remove from my sight the loved features, which, inanimate as they are, still sooth me whilst I gaze upon them, with a

feeling of maternal protection!—I forget in contemplating them, that I am an orphan; she hears me not, yet I can speak to her; her eye meets not mine, yet whilst I see her, I can recal the look, the tone with which she *has* regarded me—with which she *has* spoken to me! Oh, Fitz Aymer! is it you who would deprive me, with such cruel precipitation, of the only means I now have left of cheating the bitterness of reality!"

Whilst in plaintive accents these murmurs forced their way from her heart, once more, and unconsciously, her eye rested upon the ocean. There, with an emotion not less powerful than Fitz Aymer had experienced, but of a more mixed character, she beheld the stately vessel! Its appearance seemed to hold forth a promise of liberation, and she hailed it with grateful rapture: yet, the reflection that her mother no longer lived to share in this glad prospect, penetrated like a dagger to her heart! "But *one* day sooner," she cried, "had we but one day sooner been permitted to witness this blessed sight, how would it have re-animated her drooping spirit! The happy re-

vulsion in all her feelings might, perhaps, have saved her life! My poor, poor, mother! How exquisite would have been her joy!"

Almost blinded by the tears which this idea drew from her, Viola dashed them off, and with a sigh, again looked towards the sea. Its agitation seemed to encrease; thick volumes of clouds, heavy and low, hung over its turbid surface, and, at intervals, emitted flashes of lightning, succeeded by loud peals of thunder. Large drops of rain began to fall, and pattered upon the trees, which, rustling and disquieted, sent forth an incessant and indescribable sound, prophetic of such impending mischief, that Viola's heart felt sadder than ever; and a thousand apprehensions assailed her for the safety of those whom in imagination she already beheld exposed to the violence of the coming storm. She gazed at the vessel, she listened to the hoarse roar of the waves, the encreasing vehemence of the wind, till half distracted with fear: "They, too," she cried, "will be dashed to pieces!—Oh, that I could warn them of their danger! Why, why do they linger near this fatal

coast! Poor souls!—I shall see them amidst the billows, struggling against destruction, and have no power to assist them."

Whilst thus agitating herself for the fate of beings on whom she now no longer reposed her hopes of escape, a new object met her view, which arrested her whole attention. A small boat (at least, from its distance appearing small) suddenly emerged from behind a high point of land to the left of the spot on which she stood, and with incredible swiftness rowed towards the ship which she had been so anxiously watching.

That Fitz Aymer, as well as herself, had seen the vessel, was obvious from the incomplete state in which he had left the grave. She doubted not that he had discontinued his labour to hasten to the beach, elated with the prospect of speedy emancipation; and now represented him to herself, disappointed and filled with regret at the impediment to his views which the menacing aspect of the heavens interposed. She longed again to behold him, to sooth his disturbance, to hear what had passed between him and the people in the boat; and above all, to know whether their em-

barkation was given up entirely, or only deferred for some hours, till the turn the weather would take could be ascertained.

From habitual reluctance to incur the risk of meeting either of the Frenchmen, she hesitated some time whether to seek for Fitz Aymer along the shore, or await his return at the cave. The storm was every instant becoming more furious, and had she, generally speaking, been accessible to great alarm during these conflicts of the elements, she would have decided upon remaining within reach of shelter. But was not he whom she was so anxious to rejoin, exposed to all the danger and turbulence of the tempest? And was her own security more precious to her than his? Oh, no.--- She determined therefore, commending herself to the protection of Heaven, to descend the rock.

The beach at its foot was solitary and deserted, but far from silent! The tumultuous uproar with which the foaming waves beat against it, was almost deafening; and so high did they rise, and so thick was the vapoury spray they threw up, that, from the low ground on which she now stood, it was

impossible to descry any appearance either of boat or ship. With difficulty was she able, so roughly did the wind buffet against her, to keep her feet; yet, persevering in her efforts, she still, though slowly, pursued her course towards the headland from behind which she had seen the boat start so vigorously forward. Having reached, and, not without some hazard, for the surf almost dashed against its base—made the circuit of the little promontory, she found concealed behind it a species of bay, or rather creek, formed by the junction at that spot of a narrow river with the sea. On each side of it were high and inaccessible cliffs; and notwithstanding the violence of the present storm, it was only near its entrance that the smoothness of this sheltered inlet was in any degree ruffled: as it receded from the ocean, the stream became so calm, that its own current alone seemed to give movement to its surface. Here, safely moored, lay the battered bark which had floated the pirates to the island: but here were no traces of Fitz Aymer, although the print of many feet on the soft and marshy banks shewed that very recently

he, and probably many others, had been treading on the spot. The circumstance of missing him at this creek could give her but a momentary sensation of disappointment. It was scarcely rational to have supposed that in such weather he would, after the departure of the boat, linger unnecessarily at the mouth of the river. He was certainly gone back to the cavern, though by a path different to the one which she had pursued; and all her own wishes now pointed in the same direction.

To avert the chance however of missing him a second time, she tried to recollect a road which he had once shewn her, leading to the cave from this very promontory by a more inland circuit. On that occasion, they had passed the foot of the knoll on which the cabin was erected. Should she find the right track, she might, without shewing herself, ascertain, by listening to hear him or Felix speak, whether he was there, or whether he had proceeded straight forward to the cavern.

With this intention she set out, well aware that the course which she now meant to follow was toilsome and rugged: but

most true, 'when the mind's free, the body's delicate:' her mind was not at this period in a state to recoil at partial inconveniencies; all she thought of was how to accelerate, by any probable means, the meeting for which she was so anxious.

Yet, she had not proceeded far, ere the fury of the storm, which by this time seemed to have attained its utmost height, put her firmness to the severest test. Flash after flash, the lightning so perpetually streamed across her, that pained by its glare, she was often obliged to close her eye-lids against its penetrating effulgence, and to remain stationary till the power of vision was restored. The earth seemed to quake under her feet during the tremendous claps of thunder which followed every blaze of light; and such was the irresistible force of the wind, that many large trees were torn up by the roots, and others, bending and crashing beneath the tempest, appeared threatening the adventurous wanderer with destruction on every side. No European storm had in any degree prepared her for a tumult of nature so fearful as this; and but for the seasonable protection af-

forded her by the jutting rocks which often bordered her path, she felt persuaded that, during the sweepings of the blast, she would have been dashed to the earth; perhaps, blown headlong down some steep and sharp-pointed declivity. As she heard the roaring gusts approaching, however, she fled for refuge behind the nearest crag, or threw herself prostrate on the ground; and when the loud squall was overpast, resumed her perilous way.

At length the cabin appeared in sight, and she paused to survey it, though hopeless, when she beheld the condition to which it was reduced, of finding him she sought beneath its roof. Built of such frail materials, it had been unable to withstand the violence of the wind, and was nearly half demolished. She sighed on witnessing the change which it had undergone; how different had been its aspect in all the brightness of a sunny day, the first time that she had visited it! How many social hours had she spent within its boundary! Now, torn, defaced—and if any longer habitable at all, occupied only by the most worthless of wretches, it presented nothing to her view

but a scene of desolation, to which was associated the image of its miscreant residents.

She was passing on, saddened by the contrast, when a deep groan arrested her footsteps. It proceeded from the interior of the little fabric, and she doubted not had been uttered by the elder foreigner. She detested him: yet a sound denoting pain, whether mental or bodily, was never heard by her wholly unmoved. She knew that his son was shamefully inattentive to him: perhaps the old man, too helpless to provide for himself, was in want of food; perhaps the fall of some part of the building had wounded him: should either be the case, she felt that it was incumbent upon her to succour him. Under this impression she drew nearer, though slowly and irresolutely, to the shattered tenement. In the only remaining corner that was still capable of affording him shelter, the forlorn old man was lying stretched upon a piece of sailcloth, his eyes half shut, his lips moving, yet uttering no articulate accents; his brow contracted, and his whole countenance denoting internal rage and agitation.

Viola cautiously stepped towards him, and speaking in French, said, "Can I do any thing for you? Are you ill? Has any accident befallen you?"

Without raising his head—almost without looking at her, he surlily answered: "No!"

"Where is your son? Why does he leave you so much alone?"

The question aroused all his dormant fierceness; his eyes flashed fire; and raising himself upon his elbow, he roared out: "My son—accursed be the unnatural villain!—is gone! He has left the island. I saw him in a boat, and that boat was already half a mile from the shore!"

The torrent of blasphemous imprecations which followed this sentence, made Viola's blood curdle; and though she sincerely pitied, she was turning from him with unconquerable disgust, when with a sort of demoniac exultation, he savagely added: "*You* are forsaken too! Your scoundrel brother is gone also!"

Had Viola given a moment's credit to an assertion so terrible, it would, thus abruptly communicated, have killed her! But re-

garding it as the mere offspring of malice and cruelty, and incapable of doing Fitz Aymer such injustice as to suffer her trust in his good faith to be shaken by the slander of a madman, she left the cabin with heightened abhorrence of its tenant; and almost regardless of the ravings of the storm, bent all her energy towards accomplishing as speedily as possible her return to the cave. There, she was assured, Fitz Aymer would now be anxiously expecting her; and there, and in his presence only, could she hope to dissipate the vexatious impression which her recent visit had left upon her mind.

The same difficulties which she had hitherto encountered attended her progress back; but she conquered them almost mechanically. With no object but to regain the cavern most speedily, she sprung over chasms which at any other time she would have trembled to approach; and braved the danger of the lightning, and the impetuosity of the blast, with an intrepidity that almost amounted to unconsciousness that they had not yet subsided.

Her painful pilgrimage was however now

terminated, and she entered the cave: but no friendly voice welcomed her return, and vainly did her eager eyes explore its dark recesses in search of the form which she had so confidently expected to behold. Fitz Aymer still was absent; and in defiance of her strongest endeavours, a shade of distrust began to gain involuntary admission into her thoughts. Yet, at first, she repelled it with the most virtuous firmness: but as time elapsed, it gained strength; and so great was its terror, that she often found it difficult to forbear uttering shrieks of anguish, and dashing her head in all the frenzy of hopelessness against the rocky floor.

The old man's assertion, disdainfully as it had been slighted, recurred now like the ominous cry of the raven, perpetually to her imagination: "*You* are forsaken too!" rung in her ears without ceasing. "If he speaks true," in a low and inward voice murmured the shuddering girl, "my doom is fixed!—I shall die;—die, I hope, ere I forfeit the use of reason,—ere I incur the dread infliction of becoming a screaming maniac in these wilds!"

The horror of this idea seemed to freeze her blood. She sat down on the earth, and holding her beating temples between her hands, tried to encourage some thought that might abate the keenness of her misery: "Fitz Aymer is noble, is generous!" cried she. "He *could* not be guilty of an act of perfidy so atrocious! He *cannot* have thus deserted me! Some accident detains him: he will be here—I must believe he will be here, ere evening arrives!"

Tranquillised in some degree by this determination still to cling to hope, she now, though with more awe than if she had never quitted it, crept towards the couch on which reposed the remains of her mother: "I will look again at that beloved face," cried she, "and the remembrance of the confidence with which I so lately saw it turned towards him whom she appointed my protector, will help to banish these distracting doubts."

The first glance however which she cast upon the lifeless visage redoubled all the consternation of the moment, and almost made her recoil with impulsive horror.—Rapid in its progress under the influence of so fervid an atmosphere, corruption had

now so imperiously possessed itself of its inevitable prey, that there remained no visible part of the body undeformed by livid spots, uncontaminated by the most hideous symptoms of mortality. Viola, when she quitted the cave, had not been sensible of these approaching consequences of dissolution; nor, indeed, were they then, though perceptible to Fitz Aymer's more experienced eye, so strikingly and universally apparent: but during an absence of only a few hours, they had spread with such direful rapidity, that nothing could be more frightfully repulsive than the object now presented to her view.

A sickness like that of death came over her, whilst, transfixed, aghast, she stood contemplating this appalling spectacle. It was too fearful to call forth tears;—those collected in her eyes were dried up in their burning sockets; she neither moved nor had power to withdraw her strained gaze from the terrible object which, as if by fascination, enchained, compelled, absorbed her whole attention.

After a long and profoundly solemn pause: "Oh, that I should live---that I

should live," she cried, "to witness such a sight! To stand unsupported, unconsoled, a solitary spectatress of the tremendous ravages wrought by death on the features of ---my mother! Oh, my mother! even in a better world, will not sorrow touch thy tender spirit for the sufferings, at this awful moment, of thy deserted child!—Ah, no!—Peace, peace, I trust, and everlasting happiness, are thy portion!—Where thou art, all tears are wiped away;—and where thou art, soon, oh, soon may thy Viola be also!"

Then, reverently and gently spreading a covering over the honoured countenance, "Sacred," she added, "even from *my* contemplation, be the view of thy disfigured aspect. These eyes have looked their last; but in this heart, thy image, as in better times, is engraven for ever!"

Retreating slowly, mournfully, she once more repaired to the entrance of the cell, and from thence instinctively wandered to the spot which had been destined to receive her mother's dust. The spade with which Fitz Aymer had so recently been labouring, was still lying beside the broken-up sod. Viola raised it: she held it long and irre-

solutely in her hand;—recoiled from the task which yet a sense of right seemed to impose upon her;—and after a conflict with her feelings the most grievous which she had yet sustained, gained courage to strike the instrument into the earth. Weak and tottering, her utmost efforts scarcely sufficed to make upon the stubborn soil the slightest impression: "I could better," she dejectedly cried, shaking her head, "I could better dig it with my tears than with my hands! Oh, cruel Fitz Aymer! was this an office thou should'st have left for a *daughter* to perform!"

Her strength, her resolution, as she pronounced the name of Fitz Aymer, wholly forsook her. She could now no longer cherish the faintest remaining doubt of his departure; and its treachery, its heartless, inconceivable barbarity, pierced her bosom with a thousand pangs. The spade dropped from her feeble hand, and throwing herself upon the damp earth—"Oh, that death, my only refuge, would come to my relief! —Horror has done its worst:—I fear nothing but to live!----My heart, my thoughts, are all bitterness, and the very

light of heaven is hateful to me!---Unfeeling, pitiless Fitz Aymer!---Is there a term, ---is there a name in the whole catalogue of human depravity, black enough to describe thy unparalleled selfishness!"

She was silent a few moments, and still lay motionless upon the edge of the grave. The storm had for an interval abated, but was now beginning again with renewed violence. She heeded it not:

> 'The tempest in her mind
> 'Did from her senses take all feelings else,
> 'Save what beat there.'

Whilst thus surrendering herself a prey to torpid misery, a lofty and magnificent palmetto, at no considerable distance, was struck by so intense a flash of lightning, that, instantaneously divested of its tufted green summit, and riven asunder from top to bottom, it was left a blackened, bare, and sapless trunk.

Viola raised her head; but, undismayed, surveyed the blasted palm tree with no emotion save that of envy: "The arrows of destruction are still abroad," cried she, "yet they touch not me! The fires of

heaven consume all things else around, yet they leave me to be the prey of gradual and slow-killing wretchedness!—Oh, Father of the desolate, take me to thy rest! —Whom have I in heaven or on earth but thee?—'*The eye that hath seen me, shall see me no more.---He who was my companion, my guide, mine own familiar friend,* hath he not forsaken me!---I am utterly bereft!---I am without hope,---without support,---alone in creation, and the veriest wretch that ever sighed for death!"

Her head sunk again upon the earth as she pronounced these words, and a species of insensibility crept over her, the united effect of extreme fatigue and sorrow, which for awhile relieved her from all consciousness of her forlorn and miserable fate. The rain beat upon her,---the thunder rolled above her,---the lightning glared around her;---she neither felt the one, nor heard or saw the others. Her faculties were totally suspended; her strength subdued; her pulse almost gone.

CHAP. XII.

Was it for *thee* to scourge thy father's sins,
Detested parricide!—his greatest crime
Was giving being to so vile a son!

STANLEY.

EVENING was beginning to envelope in its gloom every object upon the island, and Viola still lay extended near her mother's grave, when two men rapidly approached; and, by the feeble twilight that yet remained, discovered her melancholy situation. Struck with dread on thus beholding her, one of them,---it was the friend she had so unjustly arraigned,---sprung forward, and raising her impetuously from the ground, bore her, pallid, drooping, senseless, to the cavern. There, delivering her for a moment to his companion, he hastened to kindle a light; and then returning, put it into the hands of her supporter, and took from him again his inanimate burthen. Her eyes

were closed, her arms hung lifelessly by her side, and her wan cheek rested upon his shoulder. He placed her gently on the ground, and bending upon one knee, raised her head upon his arm, and poured from a small flask which his associate presented to him, some species of cordial into her mouth. The light, as the stranger leant forward with it to facilitate this operation, shone not upon Fitz Aymer, but fell strongly upon his own face:---it was hard featured and weather-beaten: his short and square-built figure was habited in a coarse jacket and trowsers: his hair, greasy and lank, was interspersed with locks of grey; and his hands, broad and sinewy, appeared to have the roughness as well as the colour of oaken bark.

The restorative, whatever it was, which had been administered to Viola, gradually recalled her to life. She drew a deep convulsive sigh; and half opening her languid eyes, their first look rested upon the harsh aspect of the man who held the lamp. She started, and appeared terrified: "Let me die---let me die!" she faintly exclaimed,--- and turning away her face, she spread before

it one of her hands, whilst with the other she sought to repel the stranger's vicinity. Fitz Aymer, on whom she still unconsciously leaned, made a signal to the man; who, placing the lamp on the ground, retreated, and repaired into the furthest recess of the cavern, where lay the body of Lady Earlingford. He presently returned, bearing it in his arms wrapt in a dark boat-cloak which had belonged to her nephew. He stepped silently and cautiously past Viola, who saw not what was taking place, and proceeded with his melancholy freight to the outlet of the cave; whence, with no other light than that afforded by the rays of a watery moon, he directed his course towards the intended place of burial.

Viola soon after, again, though with trembling abruptness, ventured to look up. The unknown was gone:—"Blessed deliverance!" she softly ejaculated; then, making a feeble attempt to raise herself, a vague consciousness struck her of some impediment, foreign to her own weakness, which seemed to oppose the effort. Her eyes at the same moment fell upon a hand encircling her waist: she shuddered, and

shrunk from its support as though some noxious reptile had been twined around her, ---and, at length, by a desperate exertion of courage compelling herself to turn her head, she snatched a wild and fearful look at the being by whom she was upheld.

The glance was electric!—With a scream that reverberated through every part of the rocky dwelling, she disengaged herself from the arm that sustained her—flung herself upon her knees, before she could be prevented, and passionately embracing those of her agitated companion, rapturously exclaimed: "It is himself!—It is Fitz Aymer! O merciful Providence, forgive my impious despair!—Bless—bless him, Heaven, as he has blessed the grateful Viola!"

Raising, and folding her to his heart—"Sweet Viola!" cried Fitz Aymer, in an accent of the tenderest emotion, "who but an angel like you, after so long and apparently inhuman a desertion, would have given me a reception of such unreproaching kindness!"—He could say no more; for Felix, whom he had left asleep in the cave when he went to the burying-place in search of Viola—Felix, awakened by her extatic

cry, started up, and flying towards her, threw his arms round her neck, and kissed her with the liveliest joy. Touched by his affection, she tenderly embraced him; but she had no power to speak. A reverse so sudden from despondency the most overwhelming, to felicity the most exquisite, was nearly intolerable. All she could do, was to look up at Fitz Aymer with bright but tearful gratitude; to hang upon every word he uttered with enthusiastic transport; to check every rising sob,—almost to suspend her respiration, lest she should lose a single accent of that loved voice which she had so recently despaired of ever hearing again.

Observing how strongly she was still affected, Fitz Aymer now supported her to one of the rude seats with which he had furnished the cavern, and placing himself beside her, whilst Felix sunk gently to rest again on his shoulder:—"I have a long—a painful story to relate," said he; "one, which in justification of my own conduct, I am inexpressibly anxious you should hear."

"All, all is justified!" cried Viola, in a

tone of the softest conciliation.—"Your presence dissipates every cloud,---restores me to serenity, to hope, to a feeling which I had thought banished for ever,---a feeling of happiness unspeakable!"

Fitz Aymer fixed his eyes upon her with an expression of fond admiration which at any other moment would have confused her: but in the agitation of her spirits, all that indicated more than a brother's regard was lost upon her. Harassed, tortured as she had been for many hours, it was delicious to her to bask once more in the sunshine of an affectionate look; and she saw in the glances cast upon her by Fitz Aymer, the reciprocation only of her own delight in their re-union.

"This is not the time," said he, after a short interval of silence, "this, dearest Viola, is not the time to attempt describing the sentiments with which my heart overflows.---Thus much, however, I *must* say: the generous, the affecting welcome you have bestowed upon me, would alone have opened my eyes to the excellencies of your character, had I till now been blind enough to remain insensible of its worth. But I

will talk, my sweet friend, no longer of the feelings which you inspire. Hear my adventures of the past day; and when hereafter I permit myself to discuss the dearer theme which I now suppress, give to the forbearance which triumphs over my wishes the full meed of praise to which it will be so justly entitled."

Viola's eye sunk beneath his, and her hand trembled as he held it; but the slight carnation that once more tinged her cheeks, and the sweetness of expression observable in the almost imperceptible smile that lurked around her mouth, gave to her countenance a charm, an interest such as Fitz Aymer had never seen it wear before. He gazed at her in silence some moments; and then forcibly recalling his thoughts to the events which he had promised to detail, he began his little narrative: "When I hurried down to the sands," said he, "on first descrying from this rock the appearance of a European vessel, I found the younger Lamotte, already apprized of the circumstance, busily engaged in setting up a pole upon an eminence near the shore, and affixing to it an handkerchief as a signal to

the people on board. He asked me to fire a pistol as an additional call upon their attention: but I thought the report might alarm you, and refused. Yet, not less anxious than himself to attract the notice of the mariners, I kindled a large fire upon the beach, the smoke of which I hoped would answer our purpose quite as well as the discharge of my feeble artillery. It was fortunate that *smoke* was all I wanted, for so damp was my fuel, that I could not by any possible contrivance have brought it to a blaze. After an interval of most tormenting suspense, we saw a boat putting off from the ship, and rowing towards the island. The surf ran extremely high, and I was convinced that the little bark, if she held a strait course, would be in imminent danger of oversetting amongst the breakers. I therefore exerted my utmost ingenuity to make the people understand that a better approach might be found by rowing round to the eastern side of the isle. I succeeded in rendering myself intelligible, and whilst the ship lay to, the boat pursued the track which I had pointed out. Lamotte and I, meanwhile, walked close to the edge of the

water, keeping the object of our solicitude constantly in view. At length, coming opposite the mouth of the river, they entered it, and the crew immediately landed.

"Five men and a boy constituted its amount. Of what country they were, I found it difficult at first to gain any information. They spoke a jargon wholly unknown to me, and had the tawny complexions, and peculiar features of Lascars. Such I soon became convinced they were, all but one man, the apparent commander of the party, who spoke English, and had an Englishman's blunt but honest aspect. Lamotte understood the dialect of the others, and whilst he was rapidly and earnestly conversing with them, I entered into parley with my countryman. He was frank and cordial in his offers of service; but recommended to me, as he concluded that my first wish must he to quit the island, to embark as speedily as possible. They had already, he said, encountered a great deal of foul weather, and a gale he apprehended was coming on, which threatened to be still more violent than that which had driven them out of their intended course. I told

him, that I had a friend in the interior of the island whom he must give me time to go in quest of; after which, nothing need retard our departure. He looked half doubtful of the consent of his comrades to such a delay: but immediately spoke to them, and probably might have prevailed, had it not been for the diabolical interference of the Frenchman. I could not understand his words; but by the vehemence of his gesticulations, by his pointing alternately to the ship, and to the black appearance of the sky, I easily conjectured that he was endeavouring to work upon their fears respecting the weather, and trying to engage them to row off immediately. Enraged at the zeal he shewed to seize upon so favourable an opportunity of gratifying his malice, and half frantic at the idea that your deliverance might be prevented by such a miscreant, I could not repress my indignation, but grasping him by the collar, I held a pistol to his breast, and swore, that if he manœuvred in any way whatever to hasten the departure of the crew, I would blow his brains out!—But, against a man *determined* to be my scourge, how futile were

these threats ;—and, since I could not stay to inforce them, how transient must be their effect! Could I, indeed, have deputed the Englishman hither to summon you, I might have remained to keep watch over Lamotte: but Felix absolutely refused to leave me, and, except under his guidance, there was no chance that the sailor should find you. I had therefore but one resource left: I endeavoured to make our countryman my friend, by telling him, that whatever service he might have it in his power to render me, I had wealth and influence sufficient in England to requite most amply. I entreated him to exert his whole authority over the crew to repress their impatience during my inevitable absence; and better to enable him to keep Lamotte in order, I resigned to him one of the pistols, and appointed him centinel over the villain's movements. Thus having provided the only check I could oppose to my enemy's evil intentions, I quitted the beach, and set out full speed towards this recess.

"But the vindictive Frenchman was not to be so easily foiled. Scarcely had I left the shore long enough to be beyond the

reach of hearing what passed, ere, seeing the sailor for a moment off his guard, he grappled with him, wrested the pistol from his hand, leaped into the boat, and calling eagerly to the Lascars to follow, induced them all to comply, with apparently as little scruple as he felt himself. Watson, the Englishman, finding them thus bent upon re-embarking, acknowledges, that he would have imitated their example: but, whether at the instigation of Lamotte, or actuated by their own pre-conceived ill-will against him, the Lascars, to a man, refused him admittance. With boisterous shouts, they repulsed all his efforts to enter the boat; and rowing with incredible vigour, were soon secured from further importunity, he being too bad a swimmer to venture far beyond his own depth.

"In the mean time, knowing, suspecting nothing of this base transaction, I was prosecuting, without allowing myself to pause for breath, my intended route hither, when, on reaching a steep point of rock about half way on my journey, I fancied that in the pauses of the gust, I heard a distant clamour of voices. I stopped, turned, looked

towards the headland from which I had just been hastening, and descryed the boat cutting through the waves, and receding from the shore with a velocity which revenge and brutality alone could, in such a sea, have lent its crew strength to communicate to it!—I will not shock the gentleness of your spirit, dear Viola, by describing the fury with which this spectacle inspired me. Sorrow, alas! has been too early and too keen a resident in your bosom: but the stormy ascendency of passion—the outrageous madness of anger, you seem to be wholly unacquainted with. May you never behold me surrendered to their deforming influence!—In your presence, indeed, I doubt whether I *could* become such a slave to their power. Your eyes would 'look my rage away;'*—the sound of your mild voice would sooth me into peace."

"I ill merit this flattering language," said the ingenuous Viola. "I have to-day been assailed by feelings of more indignant resentment than I could at any former period have believed myself capable of expe-

* Collins.

riencing. But, Fitz Aymer, let us not dwell upon the remembrance of these turbulent and painful sensations.—Hasten to the conclusion of your tale; tellme what became of the poor Englishman. Was it him I saw leaning over me when I first recovered my recollection?"

"It was. Little imagining that any of the party remained, yet (averse from coming, whilst in such a state of irritation, to inform you of the so speedy overthrow of our better prospects) I descended once again to the shore. Old Lamotte I was convinced had been left behind; his atrocious son had not, from the very beginning of the affair, bestowed upon him the slightest recollection. I certainly should have insisted, had my endeavour to effect our own embarkation prospered, that he also should have been taken into the boat. Undeserving as he is, I could not have borne that he should have been left here to howl and perish in unaided frenzy: but my intentions in his favour were as vain as they had proved in my own. I saw the poor old wretch, just as I reached again the sea-side, slowly retreating towards the hut, after having, I suppose, been

drawn down to the shore by the shouts of the sailors, and witnessed their inhuman departure. I did not speak to, or attempt to stop him; and he pursued his cheerless way without observing me.

"Scarcely had I lost sight of him, when an object far more worthy of compassion—the unfortunate Englishman, appeared before me. I started on beholding him, and my heart ached at the deep consternation impressed upon his countenance. Yet, though filled, as was so natural, with dismay at his own situation, and indignation at the treachery of his companions, there was nothing either unmanly or ferocious in the view which he took of the comfortless predicament to which he was reduced. He related to me with more coherency than, under such circumstances, I could have expected, the scene which had passed between him and the boat's crew. They were, he said, an abandoned, knavish set, and now seemed to be joined by one (meaning Lamotte) well worthy to be their ringleader. He had disliked his situation amongst them from the first moment he entered the vessel: but necessity had com-

pelled him to become their messmate; and he had therefore tried to make the best of a bad case. He had originally sailed from England in a king's ship, sent out as convoy to a fleet of merchantmen. On arriving in India, a fever attacked him, which, after it had subsided, left him for many weeks in such a state of weakness, that, being unfit for service, his captain was obliged to quit the port without him. When gradually his strength encreased, his finances declined;—there were no vessels immediately expected from England—' and so, Sir, rather than starve,' concluded the poor fellow, ' I engaged on board a country ship, meaning, after having made one voyage, to enter again, by the first opportunity, into his majesty's service. These scoundrels have for the present disappointed me: but I should not be at all surprised if their captain—supposing the weather permits him to loiter in these parts—should send back a boat to take me off. He is a civilized sort of a man enough, and knows when he has got a good hand on board: and be it spoken, Sir, without bragging, I was the best,—nay, I was well nigh the

only sailor he had under his command. His thieving sculking Lascars, know no more how to manage a ship in a gale than the rats in her hold!'--- Rejoicing that the honest creature," continued Fitz Aymer, "retained any idea on which to found a hope of rescue, I encouraged his consolatory view of a disaster, which, however, I must acknowledge, appeared to me quite desperate. I could never suppose that either Lamotte or the Lascars would confess to their commander the circumstances under which Watson had been left behind: he would be represented as having perished by some accident; and though regretted, no effort would be made to redeem him.

"Having related his own story, he expressed a desire to hear mine. I told him all that it was necessary he should know; and then invited him to accompany me to the friend for whom I had so earnestly desired to secure the means of liberation. We came hither, dearest Viola, without entertaining a doubt of finding you: judge, then, how great must have been my consternation, my perplexity, on discovering your absence! In such weather, and igno-

rant as I supposed you of the arrival of the boat, what could have attracted you to any distance from the cavern? Vainly we called; we sought for you in every direction; you neither answered nor appeared: and the alarm which I began to experience, nearly distracted me. At length, I was struck with an idea, that apprehensive perhaps of some new quarrel between Lamotte and me, you had, in the kindness of your heart, and in defiance of the storm, ventured to the cabin in pursuit of me. No sooner had this thought started into my imagination, than I flew down the rock, and sped without an instant's delay towards the hut. The sight which I there witnessed —forgive me, Viola!—almost drove even *your* remembrance from my mind. The wretched old Lamotte appeared struggling with the pangs of death: his intellects, probably in consequence of the shock given to them by the desertion of his son, were totally alienated: his whole frame was convulsed, his eyes were fixed in their sockets, and the distortion of every feature announced the impending—I could not but hope—the speedy separation of soul and

body. Was it possible, beholding him in such a situation, immediately to leave him? I know you will say, that it would have been inhuman to withhold from him the trifling succour in my power to bestow:---yet, so anxious was I for your restoration, that the moment Watson, whom I had far outstripped, joined me at the cabin, I committed the miserable old man to his good offices, and set out again in quest of you. It were vain to attempt enumerating every spot I explored; vainer still would it be to attempt describing the agony with which your disappearance filled me! The strangest alarms begun to agitate me;---I sometimes feared, that having strayed to the beach whilst the boat was in sight, the people within her had put back, and forced you on board! at other moments I terrified myself with the apprehension that the lightning had struck you,---that you were lying in some covert, or under some blasted tree, a blackened corse!---Oh, Viola-- can you not feel for the despair with which such horrible ideas must have inspired me!---I almost envied the dying Lamotte;---for if you were indeed gone,---or if, by the fury

of the elements, you had been destroyed, what had I left on earth to live for!---Viola," continued he, hurried away by his feelings, and casting aside, unconsciously, the discretion which he had so recently professed---" what I then suffered---and the joy I have experienced on finding you again, render me clear-sighted as to the nature of the sentiments glowing for you in my heart!--- I am convinced that the whole happiness or misery of my future existence depend upon you!---You are the only being with whom, henceforward, I could bear, in any situation, to connect my fate!---you *are* my fate!— And the value which I attach to your good opinion, to your confidence, and---may I say it?---to your love, is greater than I attach to any other earthly blessing. Start not at this unaccustomed language: you ought to know me now too well, to believe me capable of a thought injurious to the purity of your nature. Whilst we are here, I yet again swear to you, to ask no more than a brother's place in your affection: but we cannot---my whole heart assures me that we cannot be here for life. You have saved me from a treacherous death; you have

shewn a trust in me which has manifested the fairest estimation of my principles; your whole conduct has been such as to awaken my warmest gratitude, my most unqualified admiration and tenderness. I love you, Viola, as no other human being ever *can* love you. I have seen you in situations differing utterly from those of common life; in situations which have wrung my heart with an excess of pity which it is not possible that any other man can ever experience for you. Our misfortunes will have united us by a thousand links; a thousand affecting remembrances will dwell upon our minds such as can never connect us with any other individual: we shall have been partners in calamity: we shall, by innumerable good offices, have drawn closer the ties that bind us to each other: we shall have participated in the same hopes, the same fears, the same privations, and the same sufferings. Oh, then, beloved of my heart! at whatever period our deliverance may be effected, let us still be participators of the same destiny! Say that you will hereafter be mine---that your hand, your

faith, your unalterable affection, will be mine!"

Tears trickled fast down the cheeks of Viola whilst listening to this persuasive language; but they were tears of which she was half ready, with Miranda, to say, 'I am a fool to weep at what I am glad of!' To know that Fitz Aymer loved her, dear as he was to her own heart, seemed all that was wanting to confirm the resolution which she had often in secret formed, to dedicate her future life to the repayment of his present kindness. When he paused, and earnestly regarding her, appeared seeking in her glistening eyes the answer to his application, she gave him her hand, and with an air of innocent security, of modest but undisguised affection, said: "I required but to know that you would value such a promise, to pledge myself, dear Fitz Aymer, never to be the wife of any other man. I feel with you, that our past misfortunes, our mutual dangers, our similar trials, form ties between us, which even in prosperity---should prosperity again attend us---it would be almost unnatural to dis-

sever. If such were my thoughts whilst seeing you hover like a tender son around my dying mother, can you suppose them altered by the generous sacrifice you have made for me to-day? But for me, you might now have been on your way to Europe; and but for you," added she, in an accent the most touching, "*I* might now have been on my way to the world of spirits! I was very nearly gone when you came to recall me to existence.---Oh, what were the bitter feelings which had preceded, ---which had driven me to the state of insensibility in which you found me!---I thought, Fitz Aymer, that the virtues which I had attributed to you, were utterly visionary;----that you were as base and cruel, as I had hitherto believed you to be manly and humane! To be thus, as I imagined, deceived in you, constituted, I may most truly say, the most afflicting portion of my sufferings!---But we will talk, my kind protector, of our late miseries no more;---of *separation* we will never even think!---There is, however, another subject, scarcely less painful, to which I must call your immediate attention. My mother,

---oh, Fitz Aymer, how shall I tell you the dreadful truth!---A change too terrible to describe has taken place in her whole appearance. I went at close of day to view her revered countenance, and the unspeakable horror with which I beheld the devastation wrought upon it, no time can ever efface from my remembrance.---Fitz Aymer, you had begun a grave---I tried to proceed in the awful task——"

Her voice failed her, and she stopped: but Fitz Aymer well understood her melancholy meaning:---"You, Viola!"---cried he, shuddering, "you employed in digging the grave of your mother! Oh, heaven! what, during such a process, must have been your thoughts of *me!*"---Then, after a short pause: "All that you would wish to have done," he added, in a more collected tone, "has been performed.---Our new associate, Watson, has received every requisite direction as to the chosen spot; and, to spare your feelings, the honoured remains were conveyed from hence before you had entirely recovered your recollection."

Viola, shrinking into herself, folded her hands, and in mental devotion, too sincerely

respected by Fitz Aymer to be interrupted, spent the interval till the return of the Englishman.--On hearing him approach, she started up, and would have fled into the inner cave: but gently arresting her steps: "Do not, my Viola," said Fitz Aymer, "shun an interview which delay will only render more painful. It may---nay, I feel that it must distress you, to behold him at the very moment when you have learnt how he has been last employed:---yet, remember, that for having undertaken that employment, you are under obligation to him,---remember, dearest Viola, that your thanks rather than your avoidance are due to him."

"True, true!" cried the ever-candid girl---"I will stay---I will in all things be guided by your better judgment.---But in what light does he regard me? Does he know that I am disguised?"

"I have called you my sister, and he thinks that your being in boy's clothes is the effect of necessity;---that you have no other garments."

The worthy seaman now entered, and Fitz Aymer, followed at some distance by Viola, approached him, and gratefully

acknowledged the service which he had rendered them.

"Ah, Master," cried Watson, "I have helped to lower many an honest messmate over the ship's side. It is no new thing to me to have dealings with the dead; and for that matter, some there be, that I would sooner serve after the breath is out of them, than whilst they be living. There's yonder old Frenchman;---hang me, but I would rather be his sexton than his nurse!"

"Is there any prospect of his recovery?" said Viola.

"Not in this world!" bluntly answered the sailor.---"His soul is gone to kingdom come, and his body is left for worm's meat."

"Is he then dead?" she hastily cried, turning to Fitz Aymer.

"Poor wretch, he has indeed breathed his last!---After I had traced every probable and improbable path in search of you;---after I had a second time revisited this cave, and still found it deserted, I again repaired to the hut. The forlorn old man was in the very agonies of death, and in less than ten minutes, expired as I stood beside him.

Whether through neglect, intemperance, or despair at being abandoned, his life appears to have been more suddenly terminated than, with such an iron frame, it was natural to have expected. The villany of forsaking him, his son might have spared himself, and yet have escaped any long endurance of his company."

"Well, well, since he is gone," resumed the Seaman, "there's no more to be said. Better so, mayhap, than otherwise. Good fathers, they say, make good children: by that rule, the old fellow could be no great matter of a saint; for his son, to my mind, is one of the biggest scoundrels that ever walked the earth.---But, Master," continued the poor man, looking wishfully round him, "have not you got any stowage for the stomach? I am deucedly an hungered. Your fruits, and such like washy victuals, are but poor trash to live upon, without a little beef and biscuit."

His new hosts hastened to set before him the best provisions which they had at hand, and both felt the necessity, after all they had gone through, of taking some nourishment themselves. Watson, as soon as

he had finished his repast, made a pillow of his coarse jacket, threw himself down in a corner of the cave, and bidding them good night, dropped, in less than three minutes, into the soundest repose. Viola, soon after, requested Fitz Aymer to carry Felix to the couch which she had shared with him the preceding night; and then, half dead with fatigue, followed, and found, to her own astonishment, that neither grief for a mother's loss, nor joy for the restoration of a friend, had power to repel from her heavy eye-lids the importunate solicitations of sleep. The instant that Fitz Aymer left her, she lay down, and sunk into a forgettulness almost lethargic.

CHAP. XIII.

I'll no say men are villains a';—
The real hardened wicked,
Who know no check but human law,
Are to a few restricted:
But oh, mankind are unco weak,
An' little to be trusted;
If self the wavering balance shake
It's rarely right adjusted.

BURNS.

VIOLA was the last of the little party who awoke: but her sleep, long and unbroken as it had been, seemed neither to have refreshed nor strengthened her. Her head ached, her limbs were stiff and painful, her mouth was parched with thirst. She tried to sit up, but giddy and shivering, she found it utterly impossible. "I am very ill," she mentally cried; "I certainly am very ill!—Ah, poor Fitz Aymer, how will you bear this new infliction!" She sighed, and closing again her eyes, swimming in

tears, drew the covering that was spread over her, higher round her head, and in silent dejection, ruminated upon the probable consequences of the present disordered state of her feelings.

Whilst thus she lay, helpless, and flushed with fever, Fitz Aymer, long since arisen, had been with the friendly Seaman at Lady Earlingford's grave, to assist in giving it, ere it should be visited by her daughter, every appearance of neatness in his power. On his return, he met Felix, who told him that Viola was still asleep; a circumstance at which he rejoiced, convinced that after the sufferings and exertions of the preceding day, a longer period of rest than usual must be indispensably requisite for her. In order, therefore, to keep every thing in and about the cavern perfectly quiet, he took his two companions with him, and proceeded to the hut. The body of the deceased Frenchman was still lying there. Fitz Aymer and Watson removed it; they again employed themselves in the gloomy task of preparing a receptacle for the dead; and having deposited within it its ghastly tenant, Fitz Aymer left the Seaman to wander

about at his pleasure, and returned to the cavern.

He entered it cautiously, unwilling, should Viola still be reposing, to disturb her, yet hoping that he should now find her up, and ready to receive him. Still, however, the outward cave remained empty. He felt disappointed, and the place, to his apprehension, thus unoccupied and silent, looked peculiarly dreary;—it reminded him of the alarm with which, but the day before, he had seen it in a similar state. "She is here now," he cried; "I can have no fears for her now! Yet this vacuity—this profound stillness, chills, and, I know not why, dismays me." At that moment he thought he heard a faint groan: it struck to his heart! He drew nearer to the interior cell, and listening with even painful intentness, caught a more distinct repetition of the plaintive sound. No longer able to controul his anxiety, he rushed forward, and the sad truth became palpable to him in a moment. Viola was ill.—Viola, in the very place where her mother had expired, was perhaps expiring herself of the same disease! He execrated himself for having

suffered her to sleep in an air which he began to think must be loaded with infection. He felt her hand, and started at its burning heat: "Oh, Viola!" exclaimed he, kneeling by her side, "what yet untried calamity is coming upon me! I could have borne every thing but this!" and in the agony of his heart, he threw his face upon the couch, and wept like an infant.

Grieved, though too well convinced of his affection to feel surprised at his disturbance, Viola was herself so much agitated, as to be for some moments unable to speak. At length, gently pressing her hand upon his shoulder, she found voice to say: "Look up, dearest Fitz Aymer: take courage!—If *you* despair, how shall *I* gain resolution to struggle against this attack? Be composed, I entreat you;—the sight of your distress is more painful to me than the severest personal suffering!—Upon your care, your kindness, my only friend, I must, under Providence, depend for my sole chance of recovery: disable not yourself then, by taking alarm so precipitately, from bestowing upon me the attentions, without

which, it is impossible you should preserve me."

These representations were not ineffectual. Fitz Aymer started up, conjuring her to point out to him in what way he could administer to her relief. She asked him to bring her some drink, and whilst she was allaying with it the thirst that had consumed her, he told her, acquiring more presence of mind, that it was his first and most earnest wish to remove her into the outward cell, where she might enjoy a freer circulation of air. She assented to the proposal, and sent him to arrange a place for her reception, whilst, somewhat recruited by the refreshment he had given her, she prepared for his return.

The comparative coolness of the exterior cavern, the unremitting assiduities of Fitz Aymer, and the peace of mind imparted by the knowledge, that she had now none but friends around her, soon operated a favourable change in her symptoms. She was languid and very feeble for some days: but the pain that had accompanied the early stage of the complaint, gradually subsided: she could converse, though neither long, nor

with animation; she could enjoy, and tenderly acknowledge, every fresh instance of Fitz Aymer's anxious care; she could listen with delight when he read to her, or with still greater delight, when he spoke—when he set before her, in vivid colours, a picture of the felicity that would attend their restoration to society, their future union, and their mutual and unfailing attachment.

Meanwhile, the Seaman, anxious for some pursuit, examined most accurately the condition of the pirate's boat, and soon came to a resolution of exerting all his ingenuity in putting it into a fit state for service. Many were the difficulties with which, in the course of the undertaking, he had to contend. He was in want both of proper tools, and of fit materials, for his design: but address and perseverance will often supply the place of every other requisite. He never relaxed in his enterprize: fertile in resources, he found substitutes for all that he most needed, either in the natural productions of the island, or in the yet remaining contents of the chest: and by the time Viola was strong enough to visit, supported by Fitz Aymer, the

place where their new assistant was at work, she was surprised and charmed at the progress which he had made. A sort of shed was constructed for her accommodation near the spot; and thence, day after day, she sat watching their labour—for Fitz Aymer now engaged with ardour in the same employment—and thither, when wearied, he repaired for rest, and was received by her with an outstretched hand, and a smile of cordial welcome that more than repaid him for all his toil.

The weather, though no longer invariable and clear as it had been on their first landing, was, however, far from being perpetually tempestuous; their evenings, in particular, were often cloudlessly serene. During one of these, Viola and Fitz Aymer, by the mild light of a moon nearly at the full, strolled down to the beach, and paced for a considerable time the smooth sand that sparkled under their feet. The sea was as unruffled as the most polished mirror; the air was soft and fragrant; every thing around them wore an aspect of purity and peace, and their hearts, in unison with the scene, were alive to all its charms, and more dis-

posed, than at any preceding moment, to entire openness and unreserve.

"You have never, my Viola," said Fitz Aymer, suddenly changing the conversation, which had hitherto turned upon the beauties of the night, "you have never yet questioned me on the subject of the obvious prejudice which your lamented mother, during the early period of our intercourse here, entertained against me. I remember indeed, that once, whilst still calling yourself Edmund, you threw out a hint of wishing to know its origin: but I refused to gratify you. Have you no longer any curiosity to hear the mystery explained?"

"I no longer," answered she, "feel the misgivings which, at that time, made me anxious for whatever exculpation you could offer of circumstances which I had been taught to suppose must have been wrong: but I can never cease, dear Fitz Aymer, to feel the liveliest interest in all your affairs; though now, such is my perfect faith in your integrity, that without a wish to penetrate further into them than it may be your own choice to allow, I rest secure in

the belief, that I have entrusted my happiness into honourable hands, and look forward with cheerful hope to the future, from the experience I have had of the past."

"Kind and excellent Viola!" exclaimed Fitz Aymer; "how this touching confidence endears you to my heart!—No obligation could more powerfully bind me to merit your trust, than the consciousness that it is thus generously bestowed. I never had the principles of a systematic libertine: but I have heard even those to whom such principles were familiar, affirm, that their system never was in so much danger of being shaken, as when they met with a thoroughly guileless nature, relying unsuspiciously upon their good faith."

He then led her to a low rock which had been left dry by the ebbing tide; and as they sat, the clear rays of the moon were reflected so brightly upon his countenance, that every change in its expression was as visible to her as at noon-day:—"I am now," said he, "about to enter upon a detail, which, I fear, will in many respects be distressing to you. Lady Earlingford herself, though less inveterate than your father,

always considered the transactions to which it relates, in the darkest point of view; she touched upon it, I well know, in the conversations which she held with you: I therefore deem it incumbent upon me, circumstanced as we now are, to be thoroughly explicit in my confession;—at the same time, I sincerely lament that in so doing, I must, in some degree, unavoidably shake the good opinion which you, no doubt, at present entertain of two very near connexions—Mrs. Melross, and her brother."

"Mrs. Melross!" echoed Viola;—"is it possible that you can have any thing unfavourable to state of *her!*"

"Hear me with patience, dearest Viola, and suspend your judgment till you are in possession of the whole story.—Mrs. Melross was an entire stranger to me, when, at a club I had long frequented, I became acquainted with her brother, one of its newly-elected members. Rash, self-willed, and, to say the least of him, thoughtless in the extreme, his passion for high play surpassing any thing I had till then witnessed, even in men of the largest fortune. I saw him, night after night, staking astonishing

sums, and almost always rising a loser. I had, at the outset of his introduction, played with him myself; and though far from possessing the ability which many of our members had acquired, I invariably was the winner when Frederic Germaine was my adversary. It was no wish of mine to contribute to the ruin of a raw novice whom I found so little difficulty in beating; and I soon gave up the habit of engaging at the same table with him, amusing myself in coping with those who were more upon an equality with me in point of skill, and less addicted to mere games of chance. Frederic, meanwhile, remained considerably my debtor; and, from finding me, I suppose, less inclined to trouble him for money than most of those with whom his accounts were still unsettled, he several times, in moments of distress, applied to me for loans, of which I afterwards saw him stripped, before he quitted the room. I could have no inducement long to foster such folly; and therefore, upon a third or fourth application, I positively refused to supply him. He bore the rebuff better than I expected, for, with all his faults, he was unconquer-

ably good-humoured; and the never-failing animation and pleasantry he possessed, rendered him, I must own, a companion whom, except at the card table, I peculiarly delighted in. Many mad frolics, such as I will not, dear Viola, astonish your inexperienced ears by relating, we perpetrated together; and I doubt not that the fame of these exploits, contributed in no small degree to establish the ill opinion your father and mother imbibed of my principles. Whoever imputes any part of Germaine's wildness and profusion, however, to *my* corrupting influence, does me, I can assure you, a very unmerited honour!—he certainly, though a year or two my junior, wanted no lessons from me on those points. He had a natural, an inextinguishable love of dissipation and riot, which no example could encrease, and no fatigue subdue. Amusing and amused, his society was courted by every young man who had either vivacity of spirits, or strength of constitution to support the disorderly habits to which he initiated them. He was superior in penetration and quickness of parts to more than half his companions—a dupe

only at the gaming table, where it was rumoured, after I had ceased giving myself the trouble of observing him, that there were not wanting men, calling themselves honourable, who made no scruple of taking continual advantage of his ignorance and infatuation. However that may be, his difficulties certainly encreased; and one of the expedients, amongst others, which he tried, to relieve them, shewed either a heart grossly depraved, or an inexperience and want of reflection almost exceeding belief. I was standing by him one night at the Opera, when a lady came into a box near us, whose beauty struck me in a very uncommon degree. I pointed her out to him, making at the same time some observation expressive of my admiration. 'She is my sister,' cried Germaine, apparently much gratified by the praise I had lavished upon her. 'That old fellow,' added he, 'at the back of her chair, is her husband. Was it not a shame to bestow her on such an ugly wretch? He is at least fifty, and she is not more than one-and-twenty. She has been married these two years, but this is her first season in London. Come, I'll take you

round to her box, and introduce you. Luckily, old Melross has no jealous whims: he lets her make acquaintance with, and receive whoever she pleases; and their house is one of the pleasantest in town.' Whilst rapidly giving me this sketch of his sister's affairs, he led me on, and with equal rapidity conducted me to her box. I was as well—nay, considering *who* introduced me, far better received than, in reason, I ought to have expected. Mrs. Melross was extremely attached to her prodigal but agreeable brother, and looked with complacency upon every one he appeared to entertain a regard for. He told her, in my presence, that I had been so excellent a friend to him,—that he was under such extraordinary obligations to me, that she could scarcely fail to view me as his tutelar genius. When I recollected, however, the nature of those obligations, I felt very little pride in hearing them recorded. To have been the purveyor of an incorrigible gamester, savoured more of weakness than generosity; and I shrunk, even with disgust, from the commendations with which Germaine thought proper to load me. Not

to tire you, my Viola, by being uselessly circumstantial, let it suffice to tell you that, dating from the evening of this first introduction, my acquaintance with Mr. and Mrs. Melross soon ripened into intimacy. The husband, though certainly too old for his blooming partner, seemed to possess her friendship, and they lived together in perfect harmony. At length, however, a shadow of discontent became visible, occasionally, upon her open brow; and she confessed to me, that it originated in the utter impracticability she found, to draw money from Mr. Melross for the relief of her brother. I reasoned with her upon the danger of furnishing Germaine, even if she had the ability, with fresh arms to injure himself; I told her, that he was becoming the prey of more crafty gamblers, and would infallibly carry every guinea he could procure to the card table, and be despoiled of it as incautiously as he had already been of the sums for which he was now so severely distressed. She heard me with apparent conviction: but the next time she saw her insatiable brother, worked upon by his importunities, she renewed in

his behalf her before-unsuccessful attacks upon Mr. Melross, and an obvious coolness, by degrees, became the consequence of his renewed denials. I found her more than once in tears; and, unable to persevere in witnessing unmoved the unhappiness she suffered, in an evil hour, my abhorrence of Frederic's vicious profusion gave way to concern for his sister, and I put into her hand a large draft for his use!"

"Oh, Fitz Aymer," interrupted Viola—"could poor Matilda be so inconsiderate as to accept it!"

"Well may you call her *poor Matilda!*" answered Fitz Aymer, sighing.—"The draft, owing to some unfortunate delay of her's in sending it to her brother, was found upon her dressing-room table by Mr. Melross. He destroyed it instantly, without listening to the explanation she would have given of the purpose for which it was intended; accused her harshly of indelicacy and imprudence in borrowing money from a man of my age; and swore that from that moment his doors should be invariably closed against me. Exasperated by his reproaches,—and indignant at what she

termed his ingratitude towards her brother's friend, she was induced, braving all consequences, to determine upon throwing herself into my protection!—Accordingly, the instant Melross left her, she stole out in the dusk, unperceived, got into a hackney-coach, and drove to my lodgings!—She asked no questions at the door; but seeing that it was opened by my servant, sprung from the carriage, and was madly darting into the house, when a gentleman who was passing, suddenly caught her arm, and forcibly drew her back. She turned, with a shriek, to look at him, and faint as was the light, recognized the stern, determined aspect of her uncle,—of your father, Viola!"

Viola hid her face in her hands, too much shocked to speak; and after a short pause, Fitz Aymer thus went on: "It so happened, that the day this ill-judged but unpremeditated measure was adopted, I dined out of town, and did not return to London till late the following morning. At some distance from my lodging, I alighted, dismissed my carriage, and walked towards a bookseller's to make some purchase. As I opened the shop door, your father came

out of it. I knew him to be unfavourably disposed towards me; but not having the most distant idea of the recent cause that justified his augmented animosity, I touched my hat in passing him, and felt no inconsiderable regret, that any part of my conduct should have deprived me of the chance of becoming better known to a man of so distinguished a reputation. He regarded me for a moment with haughty surprise, and then stalked on without deigning to take of my salutation the slightest notice. I own, that at no moment of my life, I ever experienced so strong an inclination to indulge a spirit of hostility! I stopped,—I looked after him,—my face burned—my limbs trembled with rage;—I was on the point of darting forward in pursuit of him, when Major Beauchamp, the father of poor Felix, rushed out of the shop, through the window of which he had observed the whole transaction, seized me by the arm, and changing the direction of my steps, insisted upon preventing my taking any measures to resent what had passed: 'If you *must* fight with any of the Earlingford family,' cried he, 'fight with the nephew,

—fight with Germaine; and if you kill him, the world will be rid of one of its most pernicious members! But injure not irreparably your own character, by selecting for your antagonist the most respectable individual of the whole race; a man universally honoured and loved; a man thirty years your senior; a martyr to the gout, and one whom, on every possible account, you would incur general odium for having challenged!"

"Oh, excellent Major Beauchamp!" exclaimed Viola—"How I love him for this manly interference! for this high praise of my dear father! Ah, surely, Fitz Aymer, so judicious a remonstrance could not but prevail!"

"It disarmed me at once,—not, indeed, of the resentment which I still naturally felt; but of all intention to manifest it in the way that Beauchamp deprecated. I went straight home, and there, the information which my servant gave me of the extraordinary visitor I had had, amply accounted for the increased intolerance with which Sir William had regarded me. I was, as you will easily believe, extremely

disturbed on learning the rash step Mrs. Melross had taken; and after binding the servant to strict secrecy by the influence of a bribe, joined to the obligation of an oath, I flew to the lodging of Germaine for further intelligence. He shewed me an indignant letter which he had just received from his uncle, and which he had read with so little feeling, as to jest upon it in a manner that disgusted me more than any thing I had hitherto known of him. The letter stated, that Mrs. Melross, the evening before, had only been preserved from the infamy of an elopement, by the providential intervention of her uncle, who happened to be passing at the very instant she was flying into the house of her *seducer!*---The word made me start: I felt its injustice keenly; but without pausing to utter any comments to the insensible Germaine, I went on reading. He was himself arraigned, in very bitter terms, as the prime agent of his sister's disgrace; reproached with having introduced her to one of his most dissolute club-companions for the purpose of selling her to dishonour!---She had been detected, Sir William added, in the shameless prac-

tice of receiving large sums of money from Mr. Fitz Aymer for the supply of her brother's profligacy;---which sums, there was scarcely a doubt, were to be repaid by the sacrifice of her reputation to the lawless passion of her purchaser.---Never, my dear Viola, were invectives more pointed or injurious. They stung me almost to frenzy, ---and in the fury of the moment, I told Germaine, that since his uncle was in no circumstances to give me the satisfaction I required, the business rested with *him*, and I therefore desired that he would provide himself with pistols, and accompany me instantly to some fitter scene of action:--- 'No, d——n it, Fitz Aymer,' cried he, with his wonted carelessness, 'I'll have no tilting-bout with you for another man's sins; sufficient for my shoulders is the burthen of my own. Instead of blustering about pistols, tell me, my good fellow, what nuncle means by the *large sums* which he pretends Matilda has received from you for my use? What the devil has she done with them? I have never touched any cash through her means but some little shabby savings of her own. Surely her old husband

has not pocketed the money as quietly as he seems disposed to pocket certain other favours, which you are suspected of having conferred upon him.'

"This abominable speech," continued Fitz Aymer, "filled up the measure of contempt which I already had began to entertain for the callous speaker. I arose, and telling him, that if the draft I had given to his sister had been destroyed, he might draw upon my banker for its amount; I added, that afterwards, he had nothing further to expect from me, nor did I wish ever to see his face again.---Unmoved, he suffered me to depart; and as I descended the stairs, I heard him whistling a country-dance."

"And this is the man," cried the indignant Viola, "my family accused *you* of perverting! How little did they know him!---and, unhappily, dear Fitz Aymer, how little did you yourself know what was for your own honour and interest, when you contracted so close an intimacy with one thus hardened in selfishness, thus impenetrable to shame! But, tell me; did nothing further pass between you and my

father? Did you make no attempt to acquit yourself of the imputation of having incited Matilda to leave her husband?"

"None," replied Fitz Aymer---"it was for Matilda to clear me from that charge. In a case like mine, I could say nothing in my own vindication which her unlucky flight from Mr. Melross would not tend to discredit. That flight must have stamped every suspicion against me with the seal of conviction: she alone had a right to remove that seal; and if to exonerate me, was more deeply to implicate herself, I wished for no justification at her cost. To your father also, I must confess, I had, at that time, but little inclination to humble myself by making any appeal. His inveteracy seemed so fixed and obdurate, that I gave up all hope---I had nearly said, all desire---to overcome it. In addition to this, I shortly afterwards was ordered, at an hour's notice, to join my regiment, which I heard was destined for foreign service; and, consequently, my whole time, and every thought, was necessarily given to the business of preparing for the expedition."

"And did you," with some hesitation asked Viola, "did you embark without again seeing---without even hearing from Matilda?"

"I received one short and melancholy letter from her just as I was going on board the Transport. She informed me, that her uncle had thought proper to conduct her back to the house of Mr. Melross, who was still held in total ignorance of the unwise attempt she had made to abandon it. She thanked me, with great feeling, for my past services to her brother; mourned over his impending and inevitable ruin; prayed for my prosperity and success; and bade me farewell in terms so friendly, that I could not but reflect with wonder, upon the singularity of finding that she, whom alone of all the Earlingford family I had ever (though undesignedly) injured, should be the only one possessed of a spirit of such kindness."

"And does your history," said Viola, "that part of it, at least, which is connected with Matilda's, does it terminate here? Did you not meet her again on your return to England?"

"No: she and her husband were in Scotland."

A short silence now prevailed; and then Viola, trying to subdue the tremour of her voice, and to conceal a starting tear, said: "Fitz Aymer—I think---nay, I feel persuaded, that if Matilda had not been married, she would have been the wife of your choice---you certainly loved her."

Fitz Aymer snatched her hand, delighted at this little involuntary testimony of jealous affection, and half smiling, answered: "I think---nay, I feel persuaded, that my sweet Viola is utterly mistaken. There is, no doubt, a charm in Matilda's manner, an enthusiasm in her character, which awaken a strong degree of interest: but, few men, and myself least of all, would, in a wife, desire to meet with such uncontrouled powers of imagination, such misdirected energy of sentiment as she often betrays. No," continued he, "my heart never would have found its real home in her bosom: a home secured against the inroads of passion, the dangers of distempered sensibility -- a home, the very haven of peace and kindness, such as it is assured of finding in

your's. You, dearest Viola, you only are the woman with whom it is supreme happiness to me to think of spending my life. There is in your character such genuine feeling, such candour, such indulgence, that I experience when conversing with you, an ease, a security, a disposition to confidence, which, in an equal degree, never influenced me with any other human being. Such is my dependence upon your placability, that I should not hesitate a moment, whatever error I might commit, to confess it at your tribunal: since, with all my conviction of your own purity, with all my reluctance to give you pain, the consolation of having such a friend to fly to for the confirmation of my better purposes, the alleviation of my regrets, the disburthening of my conscience, would be an irresistible inducement to full and perfect sincerity. 'The need I have of thee, thine own goodness has made:'* it has twined you round my heart; it has rendered you so inexpressibly dear to me, that, without you---without the comfort of meeting your

* Shakespear.

ever-friendly eye---of hearing your ever-soothing voice, life would be intolerable to me."

"Fear not," cried Viola, tenderly extending to him her hand, "fear not that it should ever be made so by any change which time or circumstances can produce in my affection! I know, indeed, but little of the world; I have seen few of your sex worthy to be distinguished: but I feel a conviction so strong, that the attachment which I have avowed for you could never be transferred to another;---I feel so assured that the love which you profess for me, is kinder and more generous than any which I shall ever again inspire, that, were I restored to society, and surrounded by all the allurements that rank, elegance, and refinement could combine, my sentiments would remain unaltered---would invariably be proof against every trial."

"I doubt you not, my Viola," cried Fitz Aymer; "yet, were my faith in your constancy less than that of a devotee at his shrine, I might sometimes tremble, when recollecting the inexperience of your own heart which you will carry into the world.

You were too young when thrown into this desert, to have had a fair opportunity of looking around you, of distinguishing amidst the crowd, any one individual more formed to constitute your happiness than another. Thus circumstanced, it was natural that the fellow-feeling which originally excited you to view my forlorn situation with pity, should insensibly ripen into regard---into tenderness. But how shall I always avert the apprehension, that a partiality resulting more from accident than choice,---a partiality which has never undergone the test of comparison between the value of my pretensions and those of others, will hereafter so securely bear that dangerous test as to suffer no diminution? Believe me, Viola, many will be the fears, however I may combat against them, which will unavoidably harass and torment me."

"Well then," said Viola, smiling, "set the misgivings *you* mean to entertain of my stability, against the distrust of Matilda's influence, which *I* so lately evinced, and I think we neither of us shall have much right to reproach the other for being suspicious."

As they proceeded, after this, to the cavern, she expressed much concern at the misconduct and terrible levity of Frederic Germaine: "He was capable," said she, "of rendering himself so pleasant, that if he had but possessed a heart,—or, rather, a better principled mind, he would have been the delight and pride of his whole family. I have seen very little of him during the last three or four years; but I remember the time, when his visits used to occasion a species of jubilee throughout the house; smiles and gladness greeted him, whichever way he turned, from the Master down to the lowest servant. But, just before my father left England, I know that he was incensed against him in the highest degree, and forbade him his presence: my dear mother, no doubt, perfectly understood the reason: she was always unwilling, however, to speak of any one she had cause to think ill of, and observed respecting him the most determined silence. I should be curious," added she, "to know what, by this time, has become of him."

"I think," said Fitz Aymer, "that without any great stretch of foresight, I may venture to inform you:---he is probably in a prison. The course he pursued was so madly ruinous, that his fortune, never very large, cannot possibly have held out till now: and he has no application, no diligence, to qualify himself for a profession: too much pride to enter a counting-house: and, fortunately, too little coolness and talent at the gaming table, to aim at retrieving his losses by the pillage of others."

CHAP. XIV.

There was not on that day a speck to stain
The azure Heaven; the blessed sun alone
In unapproachable sublimity
Effulgent sped through boundless fields of light.

SOUTHEY.

There is in friendship, as in love, a joy
Dear to the heart of every feeling man;
A joy that glows with less tumultuous pow'r;
But gently warms and animates the soul.

THE activity and spirit with which the seaman and Fitz Aymer persevered in their endeavours to refit the boat, at length brought the labour to a conclusion. Viola was informed, that all they were able to perform, was now accomplished; the little vessel was thoroughly water-proof, and settled weather alone was wanting to encourage their embarking.

"I cannot hear this intelligence," said she to Fitz Aymer, "with feelings of unmixed joy. We must congratulate ourselves, no doubt, at any prospect of being

re-united to society; yet, much as I have suffered upon it, I lovethis is land. My mother's remains repose within its bosom, and the earth which covers them, is hallowed by so precious a deposit. Here, too, dear Fitz Aymer, we first became acquainted, we first learnt to love each other; and here, perhaps, amidst all the privations to which we have been condemned, we have known more happiness than we shall ever experience in any other region. Yet—though dejected at the idea of departing, imagine not that I am fearful or reluctant to accompany you, go whithersoever you may. It is your presence only that can gild any prospect to me: at sea, or on shore, in a wilderness or a crowd, the sight of you alone can give value to my existence. But, tell me; upon what plan do we embark? Have you and Watson well considered the enterprize? Do you know what course to steer, or are you adventurous enough to commit yourselves to the deep in an open boat, without even a conjecture of the direction in which you ought to impel it?"

"No, dearest Viola; we are not so unreflecting. These are particulars which

Watson and I have of late meditated upon, and discussed, incessantly. He, of course, is much the ablest maritime geographer of the two; and his confidence in the feasibility of our project, is what gives me courage to propose it to your execution. He seems persuaded that we shall very speedily, by pursuing a northerly track, meet with some vessel sailing either to or from India, that will take us up, and give us safe conveyance to the port whither she is destined. We are to stock our boat with abundant means of subsistence; we are to render it as tenantable for you and Felix as our circumstances will allow; and then, when the atmosphere looks clear—when the wind is in our favour, and when you, my Viola, can 'screw your courage to the sticking place,' we are to commend ourselves to the protection of Heaven, and embark."

"My courage," said Viola, "will never desert me, whilst I know, that, happen what may, we cannot he separated; that we shall live or die together!"

Fitz Aymer gratefully pressed her hand; and assured, now, of her fortitude for the proposed undertaking, awaited with ardent

impatience the favourable moment of embarkation.

At length, early in August, about a fortnight after this conversation, Watson, thoroughly satisfied from the appearance of the sky, that a series of temperate weather might reasonably be expected, gave the long-wished-for intimation that the hour of departure was come. Viola was not present when this sentence was pronounced; but Fitz Aymer, flying to the cavern, announced to her the welcome tidings with an ecstasy that scarcely left him power to make himself intelligible. *Her* satisfaction was more chastened—was blended with emotions more solemn. Yet, reluctant to damp his felicity, she disguised from him every sentiment that corresponded not with his own, and expressed her participation in his happiness with a cheerfulness that left him nothing to regret. The following morning, at break of day, their momentous enterprize was to begin. Every thing was in readiness; an ample store of provisions was already lodged in the bark; an awning had been erected to secure her and Felix from the dews of night, and the fervours of

mid-day; nothing remained to be done except conveying to the water-side the chest of young Earlingford. This, Viola requested permission to detain till the very moment of embarkation. Her slightest wish was a law to Fitz Aymer; and accordingly it was agreed, that in the morning he should go down with Watson early to the beach; examine once more whether any addition could be made to the accommodations intended for her, and then return to fetch away the chest, and escort her to the shore.

Viola scarcely closed her eyes throughout the night; and the dreams of Fitz Aymer, though they were of a gayer character than her waking thoughts, were agitated and full of incident and hurry. Watson slept soundly; of him most justly might have been said:

> ———Thou hast been
> As one in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
> A man, that fortune's buffets and rewards
> Hast ta'en with equal thanks:

he had indeed been too long inured to the vicissitudes of life, to feel, on the present occasion, any peculiar disturbance; and though fully sensible of the hazards of the

enterprize, he awaited its result with steady intrepidity. At sun-rise, he and Fitz Aymer started up, and in conformity to the plan that had been determined upon, descended to the beach.

Viola then arose. Her heart was heavy: she could not disguise from herself that the crisis of Fitz Aymer's fate and her own, was at hand; that their lives were both at stake; and that their exposure to sufferings, perhaps, more dreadful than even death, was approaching: "Oh, give me firmness, Heaven!" she cried, "to conceal, if not to conquer these woman's fears! Let not their ill-timed appearance depress the sanguine spirit of my beloved conductor!—I can bear no part in the arduous struggle he is about to make for our deliverance; but I can lighten its difficulties by my serenity, or aggravate them by my terrors."

These were considerations which, in a mind so generous and affectionate as Viola's, could not be unavailing. They controuled her agitation, and enabled her, with comparative calmness, to prepare for the great impending event. The fit moment, it appeared to her, was now arrived, to cast off,

and for ever, her masculine attire. In the chest was contained the apparel which, previous to her interview with Fitz Aymer, she had been accustomed to wear. This she resumed, and then proceeded, for the last time, to the burial place of her mother; where, kneeling, she spent in fervent prayer, in sighs of filial and deep regret, the interval allowed her for preparing to embark.

She had just risen, but was still lingering dejectedly beneath the branches that shaded the grave, when Fitz Aymer, returning from the shore, and not finding her at the cavern, followed her footsteps, suspecting the direction which she had taken. The appearance of a female figure, graceful, delicate, and wrapt in sorrowing meditation, filled him, unaccustomed as his eyes had long been to such a sight, with amazement. Her change of dress had given to Viola an apparent encrease of height, which rendered him at first doubtful whether it could really be her that he beheld; a nearer view convinced him of the fact; and springing forward, enraptured at the metamorphosis, he folded her in his arms, exclaiming: "Beloved and lovely Viola! Oh, why have

you thus long obscured from me your beauty?---Why have you, thus long, robbed me of the delight of adoring in you, an angel in person as well as mind?---Whose are the eyes you should have been so ambitious to enchant with all your graces as mine?---I am jealous, Viola, that you should have delayed throwing off the hateful disguise which has deformed you, till you were about to plunge again into that world where others may claim the privilege of admiring you as ardently as I do!---Tell me, my heart's treasure, will no abatement in your love result from the dangerous homage to which you will, probably, soon be exposed?---The earth contains not a fairer form than this:---is the mind that animates it inaccessible to the approaches of vanity? Is it as fixed, as faithful, as unchangeable, as my anxious tenderness requires?---Do not resent this involuntary diffidence, sweetest Viola;---seeing you thus attractive; conscious how many will aspire to your favour;---conscious, at the same time, how little I have to expect from your father's support, is it wholly unnatural, that, as the moment approaches which will

rob me of your exclusive attention, I should tremble at the danger of being robbed also of your exclusive affection?"

The mantling cheek of Viola, at the beginning of this address, had sought concealment upon Fitz Aymer's shoulder;---she now raised her head, and in an accent of gentle reproach, said: "Ah, dear Fitz Aymer, with one so prone to suspicion, how shall I secure belief?---These doubts, but that you say they are involuntary, would wound me to the soul; since, never could they have been uttered at a period when my heart glowed with more kindness towards you, and therefore never could they have been uttered when I felt them to be more unjust. But I must leave to time and the testimony of actions, not professions, the task of establishing my claim to your confidence; I have said during a former conversation, as much as I *can* say; and more alas! than you are willing to credit."

"With what indifference---with what mortifying coolness, Viola, you speak of my disquiet!"

She looked up in his face with a smile that, at once, appeased him, and answered: "My dear Fitz Aymer, can you deny, that were I to speak of its *cause*, at least, with great concern, I should be paying myself a most wretched compliment?----You are harassing your mind with doubts of my fidelity, which, I am persuaded, are unreasonable.---I forgive them: but can you expect me to participate in them?---I even feel sorry for the distress they occasion you; ---but ought you to wish that I should admit it to be just?"

Fitz Aymer, regarding her with the most animated tenderness, again strained her to his bosom, and exclaimed:---"Friend, mistress, companion of my heart!---I ask of you but one indulgence,---one obligation more, and these distrusts shall be banished for ever!---Here, in this consecrated spot, renew to me your vows! Here swear, that in the peopled scenes to which we are repairing, you will remain faithful to the contract you have made with me!---The shade of your mother perhaps hovers round us; it gives sanction, doubt it not, my own

Viola, to the love you have professed for me;---to the engagement which I implore you to confirm!"

Viola, melting into tears, raised her hand, clasped in one of his, to Heaven,---cast up her streaming eyes, and, by the eloquent expression with which they beamed, gave him, though not in words, a stronger attestation than any language could have conveyed, of the inviolable sanctity with which she pledged herself to maintain her vows. Fitz Aymer understood, and knelt to thank her; knelt to take a last solemn farewell of the turf under which reposed the relics of her mother; and then drawing her, reluctant, weeping, and full of sadness from the spot, he gently conducted her to the entrance of the cave. There Watson awaited his permission to carry down the chest; and there Felix, all impatience to be gone, stood eagerly watching for his re-appearance. On seeing Viola, they both started; the child scarcely knew her: but the seaman regarding her with a complacent aspect, instinctively pulled off his hat, and addressing Fitz Aymer, said: "There be few

ladies, your honour, who, if they could look so pretty in their own proper trim, would have hung out false colours so long."

"Very few," replied Fitz Aymer, gaily; "unless in situations where they felt indifferent to, or despaired of, admiration.---Which, dear Viola, was your case?"

She forced a smile, but made no answer; and Watson, taking up the chest, hastened with it down the rock. Viola, casting one parting tearful look at the cave,---at the beautiful terrace in its front,---at the many well-remembered objects that surrounded it---the birds she had cherished----the flowers she had reared----lingered some minutes behind;---then, yielding to the wishes of Fitz Aymer, slowly followed.

Assisted by her two companions, she, at length, entered the boat. The morning was glorious; a light breeze played upon the surface of the water, and fanned the verdant boughs upon the shore; the sun, without being yet too powerful, seemed to shine auspicious on their purpose; every wave sparkled in his beams, and the lovely, lonely spot from which they were receding, with

all its woods, and all its undulated varieties, looked like a jewel in the deep, the fit resort of Mountain Nymphs and Fawns.

As long as its coast was visible, Viola held her eyes fixed upon it, though the remembrance of her mother connected itself so powerfully with the prospect, as often to obscure her sight, and draw tears in large drops unconsciously down her cheeks. Fitz Aymer, more in love, more assiduous than ever, could attend to, could think of no object but herself. The feminine softness of her appearance in her lately resumed habiliments, seemed to give new force to the tie which bound him to her. She looked so innocent and so defenceless;---her youth, her sex, her beauty so resistlessly claimed protection, that not to have felt, in contemplating her, all the best emotions of his soul awakened, would have proved a nature as devoid of sensibility as incapable of honour. Hitherto, tenderly as he had been attached to her, he had paid but little regard to her personal advantages: they now flashed upon him with unexpected brilliancy. The purity of her complexion, the symmetry of her form, the grace of her

movements, had never before lent to her such appropriate charms. He watched every attitude---he admired every feature: and the accents of her voice, that voice

> ———ever soft,
> Gentle, and low—an excellent thing in woman,*

accorded so well with the female semblance in which she once again appeared, that he wondered how it had been possible a being possessed of such attractions could have shrouded them sufficiently to succeed so long in dissembling her sex.

Meanwhile, smoothly and rapidly, their

> ———boat ran rippling through the tide
> That foamed on either side:†

and so steady was the wind, that their sail, once set, required no change. All day they pursued their prosperous course; and at night, directed by the stars, still glided on, secure and unimpeded. Viola slept much better in the boat than, the evening before, she had slept in the cavern. An awe attaches itself to the contemplation of

---

* Shakespear. † Aikin's Authur and Matilda.

an untried experiment, which often vanishes when the picture drawn by fancy gives place to sober reality. Such, now, she felt to be her case. No perils, no horrors, seemed either to surround or threaten them: the air, the sky, the ocean, all were serene and peaceful. Her associates, far from being worn by incessant toil, compelled to unremitted watchfulness, had scarcely as much to do as in their idlest moments on shore. Fitz Aymer, leaving the rudder to the management of the sailor, seated himself beside Viola, read to her, conversed with her, engaged her in a contest at chess, and so successfully beguiled the hours of their tediousness, that in the most active and animated intervals of her life, she never had experienced so little weariness or languor. When sleep began to weigh upon her eye-lids, solicitous to preserve her from suffering by the night air, Fitz Aymer threw over her the covering under which she had been accustomed to repose in the cavern, and guarded her slumbers with a thankfulness of heart, a joy in knowing that she was there, that she loved him, and felt happy in his protection, which

had never given such interest to his waking nocturnal hours before.

The night passed as temperately as the day. Watson, still sitting at the helm, often, however, slept upon his post; but the boat scudded on with no less security; and though Fitz Aymer, during many hours, kept watch with unwearied vigilance, no shoals, no sand-banks, no appearance whatever that could deform the face of the deep, presented itself to his attentive eye.—At dawn of day, seeing the sailor beginning to rouse himself, he indulged the heaviness that was creeping upon him; and lying down at the bottom of the boat, near the spot where Viola rested, he enjoyed an interval of repose as calm as her own.

In the midst of a dream the most felicitous that had ever visited him,—a dream in which he fancied himself returning from the marriage altar with Viola, and presenting her as a bride to his brother, he was abruptly awakened by the loudest, the longest shout that human lungs ever sent forth!—In an instant he was on his feet; Viola also started up, and both eagerly interrogated Watson; who, pointing to a sail which they were fast

approaching, immediately recommenced his astounding vociferation.

In a quarter of an hour, the grateful and enraptured wanderers were admitted, and hospitably welcomed on board a large and commodious English ship. It was an Indiaman homeward bound, full of passengers, and freighted with precious merchandize. The ladies on board, many of them mothers of families, gathered round Viola with the most benevolent offers of service. Trembling with joy, weeping and smiling by turns, she scarcely had voice to thank them: but the loveliness of her figure, the modest and touching character of her countenance, required no aid from words to charm and interest every beholder. After some time spent upon the deck amidst a tumult of felicitations, one of her new matronly friends proposed conducting her into the cabin, appropriated to herself and children. Viola gladly accepted the considerate invitation, and was preparing to follow her, when Fitz Aymer, who had been equally well received amongst the male passengers, pushed his way through the crowd by which she was surrounded, and with much agitation, but of no

unpleasing nature, said: "Viola, I have already found a friend!—I have found, on board this vessel, the father of Felix,—Major Beauchamp!"

As he spoke, she saw a gentleman advancing towards her, holding Felix in his arms, and still bearing the trace on his manly cheeks of the tears which paternal affection had drawn from him. He congratulated Viola (without, however, yet knowing who she was) on the prosperous issue of her perilous enterprize; said, that he believed he had to thank her for much kindness shewn to his little son; but would defer expressing what he felt till he saw her again at a moment of less hurry and confusion.---He then drew back, respectfully bowing, and suffered her and Mrs. Sidney (her friendly conductress) to proceed to that lady's cabin. There, when a little composed, she briefly, and without naming herself, told her story. It had been agreed between her and Fitz Aymer the preceding day, that in case such a fo[illegible]rtunate termination as the present should attend their adventure, they would still, to avoid impertinent remarks, call themselves brother and sister. Whether the innocent

deception would now be practicable, since Major Beauchamp was probably so well able to detect it, Viola could not determine: but till she had spoken to Fitz Aymer, and learned from him how the affair stood, she was reluctant to make premature disclosures.

The tale that she related, evidently encreased the interest which her first appearance had awakened. There was an openness in her countenance that impressed a conviction of her truth on every heart; and in her language, her deportment, were such evidences of a distinguished education, and of high bred habits, that, with spontaneous emulation, all who heard, vied in treating her not merely with benevolence, but with delicacy.

Fitz Aymer, meanwhile, shut up with his friend, now Colonel Beauchamp, was recounting to him, at his own desire, and as circumstantially as consideration for his feelings would allow, the particulars attending the Shipwreck, which had at once deprived Felix of a mother, and himself of a very dear wife. Fitz Aymer spoke with enthusiasm of the maternal heroism she had

displayed as the catastrophe approached, which threw Felix solely into his protection; ---enlarged, with unabated gratitude, upon the kindness which she had shewn him during the voyage; and paid to her memory the highest, but most deserved tribute of respect and praise.

Colonel Beauchamp had long mourned his wife as dead. Other vessels which had sailed in company with that in which she was lost, and had seen it go to pieces, conveyed the intelligence to India. Yet, though so well informed of the disastrous event, the details gleaned from Fitz Aymer affected him very deeply, and seemed to revive all the consternation and regret which the first tidings of his misfortune had excited. To withdraw his mind imperceptibly from the afflicting subject, Fitz Aymer, after granting some time to the indulgence of his friend's sorrow, proceeded to give a concise statement of his own escape. He next spoke of Viola; of her Mother;---described the coldness and constraint which had marked their early conduct to him; their gradual advances towards cordiality; lady Earlingford's illness; the confession that

she then made to him of Viola's disguise; the solemn manner in which she had bequeathed the grieving orphan to his honour; and the calamitous termination of her life which shortly followed: "Since that mournful period," continued Fitz Aymer, "Viola has been the first, and were it not impious, I might add, the only object of my thoughts!---To give you any idea of the devoted tenderness with which I love her, unless you knew the qualities which have drawn that tenderness forth, would be impossible. She is all that is innocent, ingenuous, gracious, and endearing; all that attaches man to the female character;---I find in her, friendship, counsel, consolation; ---every thing that can tend to cherish and render blissful the perfect interchange of heart subsisting between us!---Yet this sweet, and, I might almost say, idolized creature, may be despotically torn from me! —You know the strong prejudice of her father against me; you know the stern inflexibility of his nature;—where now is he?—Tell me not, dear Beauchamp, that he is returned to England, I implore you! Should he still be absent, Viola may, per-

haps, be prevailed upon to give me her hand immediately;---but, if on landing, she hears that he is arrived, a thousand conscientious scruples will assail her, which I shall have no power to surmount;---she will place herself, at once, under his authority, and I may lose her for ever!"

Fitz Aymer could scarcely have opened his heart to one more strongly predisposed than Colonel Beauchamp, to hear him with interest, to enter with warmth into his affairs, and to feel a zealous inclination to serve him. He had known Fitz Aymer from a boy; had always loved, sometimes blamed, but never imputed to him a shadow of dishonour. The inestimable obligation which, in the person of the child, his young friend had conferred upon the father, powerfully heightened the habitual attachment which that father had been wont to entertain for him; and mingled with it a sense of gratitude that seemed to render every exertion he could make for him a duty. He now informed his anxious auditor, that Sir William Earlingford, broken spirited and miserable in consequence of his heavy domestic calamity, had retired

completely from public life, and had told Colonel Beauchamp, before he quitted India, that as soon as the affairs connected with his high official situation could be arranged, he should embark for England: "It is probable, therefore," pursued the Colonel, "that he is by this time on his passage home. I know that he applied for a successor the instant he was capable of writing on business, after hearing the fatal intelligence: that successor is now, I should imagine, appointed,---perhaps arrived at his place of destination; for men who go to *fill* exalted stations are seldom delayed by so many impediments as occur to those who are about to *quit* them. The vessel we ourselves are in, has been unusually slow in her progress; she is a heavy sailer, and has been further retarded by much unfavourable weather. These are circumstances which induce me to think it very possible, that Sir William may reach England quite as soon as, nay, even earlier, than ourselves. Yet do not lose courage, my dear Fitz Aymer: his daughter shall not have been so honourably protected---my son shall not have been so generously preserved by you,

in vain!---Remember the long friendship that has subsisted between us; remember the absolute *claim* you have acquired to whatever good offices I may have the gratification of being able to perform for you; and remember, that Sir William Earlingford has always honoured me with his regard, and that the terms we are upon, authorize me to mediate between you, and may put it in my power to effect your permanent and sincere reconciliation with him."

"I find, then," said Fitz Aymer, disappointed, "that you would be no advocate for Viola's marrying me before she sees her father?"

"I have long been persuaded," answered Beauchamp, "that the best pledge a woman can give of her intention to make a good wife, is that of performing the part of a good daughter. Your Viola, you tell me, is at present all that is upright and amiable; encourage, rather than dissuade, in her—and that for your own sake, as well as others—these characteristics;—permit, I should rather say—applaud her, for paying due reverence to the father who now mourns

her so bitterly as lost, and who will receive her with such rapture when restored. Respecting *you*, the opinions he has expressed may have appeared acrimonious: respecting *her*, his feelings and sentiments have ever been the very essence of kindness; she was his pride, his joy, his chief earthly hope. If she neglects, or shews a want of proper consideration for such a parent, I shall think her as unworthy of being your wife, as of being the daughter of so excellent a man."

"I hope," cried Fitz Aymer, somewhat impatiently, "that all these axioms of duty and submission, apply to her only upon the supposition that her father is already in England, or arrives there at the same period with ourselves? You do not mean that, if he is still in India, or even still upon his passage, she is to await the efficacy of a *written* application to him; and, with an almost assured prospect of its failure, sentence me to all the horrors of procrastination, suspense—and finally, perhaps, rejection!"

"No," replied the colonel; "if we learn that Sir William has, by any unforeseen oc-

currence, been induced to defer his embarkation; that another season must pass before you can receive his answer to your proposals—marry his daughter as soon as you can prevail upon her to give you her hand. You have too nobly deserved her, to incur censure for thus seeking to abridge the long period of painful uncertainty in which you would otherwise be held. All I meant to persuade you against, was the impropriety of urging your future wife to treat her father with the species of contempt that would be evinced by a marriage contracted almost in his sight, yet without his knowledge, without even an application for his consent."

"It is possible, however," cried Fitz Aymer, "that such, after all, might be the least offensive mode of proceeding. I am irrevocably determined never to give Viola up; she has solemnly pledged herself never to renounce me. If Sir William perseveringly refuses us his suffrage, and we marry without it, will he not have reason to say, that his daughter has added insult and mockery to disobedience?"

"No: but he would have to accuse *him-*

self of errors of a far deeper die; of ingratitude towards his benefactor; of implacability towards one, who, under circumstances the most trying that man ever was placed in, proved the righteous guardian of his daughter's honour! I can imagine no obligations higher, more important, than those which you have conferred upon him. Even your benevolence to my poor boy, is not in any degree equivalent to the merit of your conduct towards Viola: I know not any terms strong enough to express the admiration to which I think it entitled."

Sensibly gratified by this warm testimony of approbation, and considerably relieved by the concluding part of their conference, Fitz Aymer now consulted his friend upon the expediency of yielding to Viola's wish of passing, whilst on board, for his sister: "*You*, Beauchamp," said he, "are certainly well aware that I have no such relation: but, probably, not another individual in the vessel ever heard my name till to-day, or can possibly tell, whether I have one sister, or a dozen, or none at all. Do you see any real objection to the temporary imposition?"

"In general, I hate impositions of every kind," answered the colonel; "but this is one, which even her father, I think, would sanction, and thank you for practising. The fewer people are informed that *Miss Earlingford* has lived many months, almost alone in a desert, with a man professedly her lover, the better: call her, therefore, Fitz Aymer for the present, by all means; and believe me, my dear fellow, it is the first wish of my heart, that you may soon be legally entitled to call her so for life."

Fitz Aymer warmly thanked him, and their conversation then branched off into other subjects.

CHAP. XV.

———Why should we
Anticipate our sorrows? 'tis like those
That die for fear of death.

DENHAM.

'Tis man alone that 'grief' descries
With forward and reverted eyes.

GRAY.

WHEN Viola and Fitz Aymer met again, they had both, by the intervention of their new friends, obtained the indulgence of a complete change of attire. She was in deep mourning; and it gratified and touched her to observe, that the dress he had selected was of the same hue. They walked together on the deck a considerable time; and Viola learnt with pleasure, that Watson had obtained as favourable a reception as themselves, and seemed already to feel himself perfectly at home. Fitz Aymer also communicated to her the heads of his conversation with Colonel Beauchamp: she deeply la-

mented the grief to which her father was described to be a prey; and in defiance of all the terror which his well-known repugnance to Fitz Aymer inspired, could not but tenderly rejoice at the prospect of so soon seeing him again. She was then told, and heard with satisfaction, that Colonel Beauchamp saw nothing to disapprove in the assertion of their pretended affinity. After this, she enquired how Felix bore the sudden transfer from their protection to that of a father whose person he had so totally forgotten. Fitz Aymer said, that the child shewed no disinclination to familiarize himself with Colonel Beauchamp: but that he was so shy of every one else on board, that though the vessel was crowded with children, he would neither speak to, nor scarcely look at one of them.

Ere they were interrupted, they fixed upon the hours when they were each day to meet, and enjoy an interval of confidential intercourse; both agreeing, that their escape from the island, if deprived of that gratification, would scarcely appear to them a blessing.

A week elapsed, and every circumstance,

exterior and interior, seemed conspiring to the felicity of their voyage. The weather was all that could be wished; their accommodations, excellent in themselves, had the additional zest which long privation gives to every advantage; the society into which they were thrown, was, in general, polished, well-informed, and cheerful, and their own spirits, insensibly recovering their native elasticity, rose to the tone which reigned throughout the party, and were in perfect harmony with every thing around. A cloud, however, shortly intervened, and threatened, for a season, to obscure their whole horizon.

One of the most distinguished amongst the passengers, was a gentleman named Melbourne; who, after residing some years in Bengal, where he held a very responsible situation, was returning to his native country, satisfied with the acquirement of a moderate but honourably-obtained fortune, and rewarded by the just esteem and approbation of the whole settlement. Fitz Aymer, early prepossessed in his favour, had presented him to Viola, and taught her to value, as they deserved, the superiority

of his abilities, and the charms of his conversation. His spring of life, indeed, was passed: he was no longer very young: but his face and figure, the one regular, yet expressive, the other, manly and dignified, gave him pretensions to personal beauty, which few men, at any age, could have rivalled. Colonel Beauchamp, without specifying his exact reasons, had, once or twice, significantly smiling, cautioned Fitz Aymer not to encourage, between *his sister* and Mr. Melbourne, too frequent an intercourse: "You are prone to jealousy, I believe," said he; "and had better avoid every danger of falling into that infirmity."

"But why should you," enquired Fitz Aymer, "so peculiarly put me on my guard respecting Mr. Melbourne?—Is he a libertine?—A seducer?"

"By no means: on the contrary, I have every reason to think him conscientiously moral and well principled."

This was all that could be drawn from the mysterious Colonel; and Fitz Aymer, perplexed, and ill at ease, applied himself, almost unconsciously, to thecomfortless task of being a secret watcher of every look

and word which Mr. Melbourne should henceforward address to Viola. He soon became aware, that, though strictly circumspect in his language, the *eyes* of that gentleman were not under equal controul: he saw them frequently fixed upon the face of Viola with an expression so closely allied to tenderness, as well as admiration, that his whole soul took the alarm. He drew her apart;—spoke to her upon the subject of his disquiet, and implored her to subject herself as seldom as possible to these enamoured contemplations. Viola, yielding and kind,—happy only when she saw him happy,—hesitated not, though with a half-admonitory smile, to give him every assurance of her ready compliance with his wishes that he could desire. After this, all went on smoothly for some days: an unlucky discovery was then made by Fitz Aymer, which revived his disturbance more painfully than ever.

He was listening to one of the gentlemen on board, who was giving a very interesting account of the flattering and extraordinary testimonies of regret shewn by every class of men in India on the first intimation of

Mr. Melbourne's intended departure, when he was startled by hearing a by-stander observe, that the very ship in which Mr. Fitz Aymer had been wrecked, had brought out a young lady, the daughter of Sir William Earlingford, who, if she had survived, was intended to have been Mr. Melbourne's wife. Fitz Aymer abruptly turned, and asked the author of this assertion on what authority it rested. The speaker seemed surprised at the sudden and almost imperious enquiry; but answered, without hesitation, that he had often been in company with Sir William, and had heard him, before the wreck was known, make the communication to a friend with whom they both dined.

"And was it in consequence of his disappointment, then," asked Fitz Aymer, "that Mr. Melbourne so speedily left India?"

"Not entirely, I believe," replied the stranger: "he assigned family reasons for wishing to return home; though, perhaps, if he had married, he might have been content to prolong his absence from Europe some years."

Fitz Aymer flew with the unwelcome intelligence, thus collected, to Colonel Beauchamp: "I knew all this before," cried the friendly soldier; "but where would have been the use of telling it to you? It has thrown your blood into a ferment, and done all the mischief which these random informants, with or without design, commonly accomplish. But now, Fitz Aymer, listen to me dispassionately, and let me try to set your impetuous mind a little at rest. Beautiful as your Viola is, she attracts not so intently the observation of Mr. Melbourne on the strength of her *own* fascinations, as in consequence of a likeness which he fancies he discovers between her and a lady with whom he was once madly in love. This he acknowledged to me, on being rallied upon the extraordinary perseverance with which I had often seen him gazing at your pretended sister. I should hope, therefore, that as you took my hint, and withdrew Viola as early as you could from his unrestrained observation, there can be no danger of his becoming seriously your rival."

"Not when he learns who she really

is?" cried the agitated Fitz Aymer. "Not when he finds that she is the very woman he was engaged to marry?—Oh, Beauchamp, how superficially have you considered the circumstances of a case which appears to me so pregnant with danger! Whatever gloss he may put upon the marked attention with which he eyes her, be assured that love---love of Viola individually---is its origin! And this man," continued he, walking rapidly up and down the colonel's cabin, "this man will be shut up with her in the narrow confines of a ship whole weeks, I should rather say, whole months longer; will have daily and innumerable opportunities, whatever precautions we may use, of seeing, of hearing, of conversing with her! She has not, as during her former voyage, a cabin exclusively her own: she shares that of Mrs. Sidney: she is, in a measure, obliged to be almost perpetually with her; and this dreaded Melbourne courts the favour, and insinuates himself into the society of Mrs. Sidney, with an assiduity that can only have her young friend for its object.—Oh, how will my unpractised Viola surmount the danger

of a siege so long protracted by a man of Melbourne's accomplishments—of Melbourne's talents and capacity to please?—This, this is the trial I have ever feared. Viola has seen so little of the world; and when she accepted the surrender of my heart, was so totally without the power of choice; so ignorant what were the qualifications which, had she lived in a state of society, would have directed her selection, that, now I behold her exposed to the homage of a man so highly endowed, I cannot but tremble at the impression which it may gradually and involuntarily produce upon her inexperienced mind."

"With these doubts of the influence which a competitor may obtain over her," said the Colonel, "is it not fortunate for you *both*, that an opportunity should occur, before you are irrevocably united, of making experiment of the steadiness of her affection? If she is capable of ceasing exclusively to love you now, there can be no question that she would have been capable of the same inconstancy had your hands been already joined;—and, in such a case,

how infinitely greater would have been your misery."

"I cannot allow," earnestly resumed Fitz Aymer, "that if we had actually been married, the danger would in any degree have been equal. What man of principle, such as you aver Mr. Melbourne to be, would have singled out a married woman as the object of his devotion in the pointed manner that he has singled out Viola? Even a profligate coxcomb, seeing her under the protection of a husband, would scarcely have ventured so conspicuously to distinguish her.—But this is not all;—had she been my wife, I should have excluded from her heart the *possibility* of any change in its affection;—my own faithful attachment; my delight in her society; my solicitude to gratify every wish she could form, would have been such strong, though imperceptible chains, that they could not but have bound her, from day to day, more indissolubly to me."

"That they *will* bind such a nature as Viola's," said Beauchamp, "I can entertain no doubt: but that they would have

been of efficacy to fix the love of a wavering, capricious woman, I have not the smallest belief. Some of the most coquetish wives I have ever known, have had the most affectionate husbands. Indulgence and attachment will, undoubtedly, upon some dispositions, produce their merited effect: but it must be where there is virtue; where a sense of duty would almost supersede their necessity, and stimulate to equal good conduct whether beloved or not."

Fitz Aymer, but little tranquillized by this conversation, now sought Viola, and communicated to her all that he had recently learned respecting the engagement with Mr. Melbourne into which her father had entered. He scrutinized her countenance, whilst speaking, with an air of ill-concealed alarm, that escaped not her observation; still less so, did the expression of deep dejection imprinted upon every feature: "My hour of trial then is come," said he—"dear Fitz Aymer, you always foretold, that, with a novice like me, such a moment *must* arrive. Bear it with resolution; condemn me not, till you find

that I am, indeed, the light and faithless being your imagination is too ready to represent me;—make not yourself unhappy—nor *me* by seeing you so—till you have proof that your heart has been misbestowed. And now, tell me," added she, affectionately, "is there any thing relating to Mr. Melbourne which I can further do, any change which I can make in my present system of conduct, that would in any measure tend to your relief. You have but to hint the slightest wish; and such not only is my anxiety to see you easy, but my happiness in feeling conscious of acting continually by your direction, that I shall hear the charge with thanks. Before I knew you, Fitz Aymer, I felt some gratification in occasionally indulging a will of my own: my highest gratification now, is to comply with your's."

"Excellent and gentle-hearted creature!" exclaimed the grateful Fitz Aymer: "a speech like this,—an abdication of your own freedom so cheerful and generous, would re-assure suspicion itself!—Of your unalterable faith, then, my Viola, I will no longer be incredulous; it would be almost

heresy: but of Mr. Melbourne's encreasing passion — friendship — admiration — call it what you please, I have a most decided belief: and the constant dread upon my mind is, that by the time we arrive in England, his attachment will have attained to such a height, that when he discovers you to be his once destined wife, his ardour to obtain your hand will exceed even your father's to bestow it."

"Fitz Aymer," cried Viola, producing, with great emotion, a written paper, "I have now in my hands a palliative for your fears, which I think will more than ever attach you to the memory of her, by whom it was so benevolently provided. This is the letter," added she, vainly endeavouring to disperse her tears, "which my beloved mother wrote in her dying moments. I permitted myself—since the time seems now drawing so near when I may look forward to a meeting with my father—I permitted myself this morning to open it. The characters in which it is traced, you will find, are scarcely legible: but its affecting purport is distinct, and will penetrate

you to the heart. Read it, dearest Fitz Aymer; it will speak best for itself."

She then presented to him, first pressing it with pious reverence to her lips, the precious and long-treasured paper. Its contents were as follows:

"If the dear child, in whose behalf I "make this final effort to address you, sur- "vives the multiplied dangers and afflictions "to which she is now exposed, she will in- "form you how awful were the circumstan- "ces under which it was written. I have "neither strength, nor probably shall have "life, for details: my sentence is passed, and "the torpor already creeping through my "frame, assures me that a few hours are all "that remain to me of life. Suffer me, then, "my husband, ere I *go hence, and am no more* "*seen*, suffer me to plead to you for the two "inestimable beings now emulating each "other in tenderness to my departing spi- "rit;—the two beings on whom my latest "looks will rest, my latest thoughts will be "fixed. In their arms I shall expire,— "and, oh, how serenely! could I quit life

" assured of their future happiness! Ear-
" lingford, that happiness, if your child is
" ever restored to you, will depend upon
" your reception of the youthful guardian
" to whose solemnly-plighted honour I am
" compelled to consign her. He has, though
" unconsciously, won her whole heart; he
" has also, let me own it, won my most un-
" qualified approbation. Oh, if he adheres
" to his oath,—if he indeed presents her to
" you, innocent and pure as when commit-
" ted to his trust, what will you not owe
" him! Banish in such a case, I adjure
" you, every vestige of resentment for past
" offences; take him to your heart, Ear-
" lingford—bless, respect, and love him;
" and should his feelings be responsive to
" our child's, make him your son! His be
" the care, to render the sweet wife his
" virtues will have obtained, as happy as
" you have rendered her grateful mother.
" Earlingford, in this world, we shall meet
" no more !---in this world you will never
" hear the blessings which my heart pours
" forth, and mingles with the prayers it
" offers up for your temporal and eternal
" welfare. May they be registered in Hea-

" ven, and conduce with your own virtues,
" to secure to you the rewards promised to
" the just! My excellent husband, fare-
" well!"

C. E.

With moistened eyes, and feelings of gratitude too powerful for words, Fitz Aymer restored this invaluable document. Viola folded, and carefully replacing it, returned to her companion, and resting her hand upon his arm, looked anxiously in his face, saying: " Are you *still* diffident, dear Fitz Aymer, of my father's willingness to relent? Do you believe it possible that he should resist an injunction such as this? Oh, do him greater justice! He will listen to my prayers;---he will grant all that my mother has so touchingly solicited;---his arms will be open to us both, and our happiness will be trebled by receiving its confirmation from his lips."

" My sweet friend," cried Fitz Aymer, surveying with delight the earnestness and animation of countenance with which she spoke, " I will endeavour to cherish these hopes as confidently as you would have me.

During this tedious interval of suspense, what, indeed, save hope, have I to subsist on? It would have been food more invigorating, however, had Mr. Melbourne been out of the question; but even in the view of such a repellent to its full efficacy, I will encourage as much as possible all good, and cheerful thoughts; and harass you no more by murmurs and distrusts."

And, to do him justice, he adhered during the remainder of the voyage with tolerable steadiness to these laudable resolutions. Not that he could at all times endure, without complaint, to see Viola submitting to the encroachments made upon her time by the unconscionable Mrs. Sidney; who, it appeared to him, was never so happy as when devising little schemes to facilitate the intercourse of Mr. Melbourne with her young *protegée*. The coldness, however, with which Viola uniformly received that gentleman's attentions, threw, by degrees, a reserve and distance into his manners, which all Mrs. Sidney's zeal for his success, and activity in promoting it, failed to remove. The change thus operated, was balm to Fitz Aymer's sensitive feelings.

He began once more to view Mr. Melbourne with unprejudiced eyes; to engage readily in conversation with him; and to admit, that wherever he appeared in any character but that of a rival, he was the most desirable of all possible additions to society.

At length, with emotions too various to be defined, Viola heard one morning, through the medium of little Felix, who was dispatched by Fitz Aymer to her bedside with the intelligence, that the sailors had just descried the English coast. Joyful, yet perturbed,—a tear and a smile contending for precedence—she instantly arose, and dressing with all the expedition in her power, hastened to the deck. She was met, the moment she appeared, by Colonel Beauchamp and his friend; who confirmed the tidings, and attempted—on the part of Fitz Aymer it was *only* an attempt—to utter congratulations. But his whole soul was in tumults:---and every alarm he had experienced throughout the voyage, seemed feeble compared with that which assailed him on this first appearance of the land where his fate was so soon to be decided. Scarcely able to utter a coherent sentence,

yet talking rapidly,---affecting an air of animation, yet pale, and, in defiance of himself, betraying the strongest internal disturbance, he drew her arm within his own, and led her to the side of the deck. There, removed from observers, his hurry of spirits and forced volubility, subsided at once into silence and abstraction;---and when Viola, after standing patiently beside him some minutes, expecting to hear a motive assigned for having been thus drawn apart, interrupted, by her enquiries, the cheerless meditation into which he had fallen, his ideas appeared so confused, that it was evident he, at first, neither understood what she said, nor remembered the design of his own movements. Surprised, and almost affrighted at the strangeness of his looks and manner, Viola now called upon him earnestly to recollect himself!—Her voice could not be long addressed to him in vain: he withdrew his eyes from the distant prospect on which they had been fixed, and resting them with an air the most melancholy upon her anxious countenance, said: "I brought you hither, beloved Viola, to contemplate with me yonder shore---to aid

me in trying to develope the destiny awaiting us in the---would I could say *dear* land now in view !---But, at this moment, I have no feelings towards my mother-country that are not joyless and unnatural. All my old attachments seem faded from my remembrance ;---the very brother I have so cordially loved,—the connexions, the friends I ought so much to delight in the expectation of meeting again,—hard, unfeeling as it may sound, they are all as nothing to me ! I have but one thought, but one wish, but one object either of hope or fear. Without you, Viola, that land of my birth,—that land, at sight of which my heart should leap with transport,—without you, it would be to me a land of abhorrence ! I shall never know in it a smiling hour,—I shall never see on its whole extended surface, a countenance that would gladden my eye, nor hear a voice that will cheer my sense of desolation, if you, Viola, are torn from me !" He then, with an impassioned energy, with a vehemence of supplication that almost defied resistance, implored her, whatever Colonel Beauchamp might have urged to dissuade her from such a measure, instantly

to accompany him to the altar on arriving in port. To oppose Fitz Aymer, was a trial to poor Viola so new, and so exquisitely painful, that her firmness nearly sunk under it. Yet, devoted to him as she was, the soundness of their friend's arguments against the plan now proposed, had stamped such perfect conviction upon her mind, and left there so indelible an impression, that they acted as a sort of talisman, and saved her from her own weakness.—As soon as she was sufficiently collected to speak, she renewed every profession of unchangeable attachment which she had ever uttered; repeated the vow she had so often made of living only for Fitz Aymer;—but, till her father had been consulted, if already landed; or till his consent had been solicited if he was speedily expected, she gently, yet steadily refused to give herself away. In vain Fitz Aymer tried to shake her determination; in vain he tried even to resent her rejection: it was spoken in words so guarded, with looks so full of sweetness, and in an accent of such tender regret, that it was as impossible to charge her with want

of sensibility, as to condemn the virtuous principle that restrained it.

When Colonel Beauchamp was made acquainted (and Fitz Aymer himself had the generosity to be his informant) with the attack she had sustained and so honourably overcome, he was enchanted: "I have only to wish," cried he, "that my dear boy, when he arrives at manhood, when he comes to be a hot-brained lover like this impetuous Fitz Aymer, may meet with a mistress as mildly resolute, as persevering in goodness, as wise, and yet as feeling as our lovely Viola!"

Swiftly now fled the hours which Viola, with a sort of chastened pleasure, of joy counteracted by unavoidable apprehension, had yet to spend on board the vessel. The moment of landing soon arrived; and with palpitating hearts, she and Fitz Aymer once more found themselves on their natal soil.

CHAP. XVI.

———————Dearest, look up:
Though fortune, visible an enemy,
Should chase us, power no jot——
Hath she to change our loves.—Beseech you, Sir,
Remember since you ow'd no more to time
Than I do now: with thought of such affections
Step forth mine advocate; at your request,
Her father will grant precious things as trifles.

SHAKESPEAR.

It had been agreed, that Viola and Fitz Aymer, after taking leave of the friends with whom they had sailed, should immediately accompany Colonel Beauchamp to London. When there, Viola was to be consigned to the protection of a sister of the Colonel's, who, since the death of her husband, had resided in her brother's house, and had formerly been intimately acquainted with Viola's mother. Watson rode with the Colonel's servant upon the box, solaced by the promise of Fitz Aymer to befriend him

through life, and encouraged, if he wished to quit the sea, to look wholly towards the companion of his late difficulties, for support on shore. Felix occupied the fourth place in their vehicle; and Mr. Melbourne, travelling post as well as themselves, took his departure for town nearly at the same instant.

Every mile, as they rapidly approached the capital, encreased the agitation of the two exiles. Interesting as the face of the country,—and delightful as the privilege of once more calling themselves *at home* would have appeared at a season of less anxious incertitude, the enjoyments resulting from these local circumstances, were scarcely felt amid the perplexities of thought attending the more immediate concerns of their own hearts. From time to time, however, as they came in view of any object familiar to their sight, and associated with the remembrance of former incidents and emotions, their thoughts were for a while withdrawn from themselves, and led back to periods that were no more. Thus, on approaching one of the inns that lay in their road, Viola recollected that it was there her lamented

mother had slept for the last time, previous to embarking for a foreign grave;—and, with tears, pointed it out to her companions. At other spots, other occurrences were recalled to memory; and neither the Colonel nor Fitz Aymer were exempt from reminiscences more or less corresponding with the sadness of her own. It was a journey which they had often performed, but seldom in a happy frame of mind;—for when their horses' heads were turned towards the coast, it usually happened, that a melancholy parting from friends and family had just preceded the change of scene, and had still left with them that weight of heart which such separations always cause: when travelling in the direction which they were now pursuing, their minds had been full of regret for comrades who had fallen; or they had returned, wounded themselves, sick, suffering, and debilitated by the climates to which they had been exposed.—These were not remembrances which could produce agreeable reflections.

In driving, after they reached town, to the residence of Colonel Beauchamp, Viola found herself, before she was aware what

streets she was passing through, suddenly turning the angle of the square in which stood the house of her father. It was a corner building, and she had a close and full view of both its fronts. The drawing-room floor was lighted up, and a footman, in Sir William's livery, was standing at the half open door.—"Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed she, grasping Beauchamp's arm, "My father is arrived!—Stop the carriage, dear Colonel, I implore you! Stop it, and make immediate enquiries. I cannot lose sight of the house in this tormenting state of uncertainty!"

Without pausing to answer her, Beauchamp called to his servant to let him out, and as he sprung from the step, Viola made an involuntary attempt to dart after him: but Fitz Aymer held her back; urging, that even for her father's sake, if he was really arrived, she ought to restrain her impatience; since there could not be a doubt, that to appear before him, like one newly risen from the dead, without giving him time for preparation, would be putting his feelings to too great a trial. This reasoning admitted no dispute, and she submitted: but with breathless anxiety, leaned from the carriage

window whilst Colonel Beauchamp was speaking to the footman, and watched incessantly all his movements. Fitz Aymer supporting and trying to calm her, though no less intent than herself in observing what passed, could yet hear nothing that was said: but he saw the servant, after the Colonel had addressed to him a few words, indicate an intention, from which, however, he was withheld, of entering the house as if to announce him; and afterwards remarked, that he several times bowed respectfully, like one receiving some message which he was promising punctually to deliver.—In a few minutes, the Colonel came back, and as he re-entered the carriage, Viola, panting with eagerness, cried—"Oh, tell me quickly!—is he—is he there!"

"He is expected every hour."

"Expected only?" incredulously repeated Fitz Aymer—"then why those lights?—Beauchamp, he is surely arrived!"

Beauchamp remained silent: and Viola, interpreting that silence into a full confirmation of the fact, which was, at once, a cause to her of such dread and joy, struggled for a few moments with her feelings,

and then, half fainting, sunk back in the carriage, overpowered by the surprise, joined with a thousand other emotions, of so sudden a discovery. The vehicle was again stopped, and every means used for her restoration which, in their present circumstances, could be applied. Her insensibility, never total, scarcely lasted a minute;—a shower of tears succeeded it, which appeared to relieve her 'o'er fraught heart;' and till their arrival at Colonel Beauchamp's door, she wept without ceasing, though not with the bitterness of one who weeps without hope, or whose tears, unmitigated by tenderness, flow only from affliction. To Fitz Aymer she left it, as well as his own discomposure would allow, to make every further enquiry that was essential.

Beauchamp informed them that, from the servant to whom he had applied, he had learned that Sir William had been in town three days; that he made no complaints, but looked thin and ill; was extremely out of spirits, and talked of removing into the country as soon as his affairs would permit: "Mrs. Melross," added the Colonel, "I heard was with him; and I therefore de-

sired that no mention might be made of me at present; but that when Sir William was alone, the servant would inform him that I had called, and meant, if I received no message to put me off, to breakfast with him to-morrow morning."

Viola, whose hand was locked in Fitz Aymer's, felt that, at these words, he shook with an alarm as powerful as her own: neither of them spoke; and the Colonel, feeling most truly for their pitiable anxiety, rejoiced rather than regretted, on reaching his own house, to learn from the servant who admitted him, that Mrs. Villiers, his sister, not knowing exactly when to ex ect him, was gone out.

Fitz Aymer, though intending to pass the night at an Hotel, alighted, and assisted Viola in ascending to the drawing-room, where, struck by her extreme paleness, and forgetful for the moment of his own disquiet, he exhorted her, as she valued his peace, to support her spirits;—talked to her of hope,—of approaching security; and late as it grew, refused to leave her, till he had succeeded in drawing from her, at least the

semblance of, a smile,—the precursor, he flattered himself, of reviving courage.

But courage, at such a juncture, it was not in Viola's nature to exert.—Anxious to escape observation, she retired, ere the return of Mrs. Villiers, to the apartment which had been assigned her, and in timid anticipations of the events of the morrow; in true filial wishes to embrace her father, and in sorrowfully ruminating upon the almost utter impracticability, (should he oppose her engagement) of conciliating the duty which she owed him, with the justice that Fitz Aymer had so indefeasible a right to claim,—she spent one of the most sleepless and unhappy nights she had almost ever known.

At an early hour, Colonel Beauchamp came to her door, purposely with the view of recommending to her, with the most considerate kindness, not to think herself under any obligation of appearing at his sister's breakfast-table, if such an effort would be painful to her: "You can give your own orders," continued he, "and at whatever hour you please, can have a basin of tea

brought to you in the adjoining dressing-room. Mrs. Villiers is far from being punctilious; she knows that you are not at the present period in a very tranquil state of mind, and she will take no offence at any system of conduct which you may chuse to pursue. But, my dear young friend," added he, "I must be furnished with every possible credential before I depart upon the embassy in which I have engaged. Give me the letter which your poor mother addressed to Sir William the day she died."

Viola, mentally ejaculating a fervent prayer for its salutary influence, delivered it to the friendly mediator so benevolently embarking in a cause of such incalculable importance to her; and with thanks and blessings warm from her heart, suffered him to leave her.

As he was, soon after, quitting the house, Fitz Aymer, but little recruited by the night he had passed, entered the hall. As mindful of his comfort as of Viola's, the Colonel bade him, without the ceremony of enquiring for Mrs. Villiers, go up to their guest's apartment, and exert his best endeavours to tranquillize her spirits during the period

of his own absence. He then put him under the conduct of a servant, who shewed him the way to Viola's sitting-room, and proceeded on foot towards the abode of Sir William.

On his arrival, the same footman to whom he had addressed himself the evening before, admitted, and was preparing to usher him immediately into his master's presence; but the Colonel stopped him; and without explaining his reasons, desired him to give instant orders to Sir William's coachman to put his horses in harness, and to hold himself in readiness to be sent whithersoever his master might be pleased to command, at a moment's warning. The man stared: but promised obedience, and then Beauchamp repaired to the library of his friend.

Sir William Earlingford had married at a somewhat advanced age, and was at this period considerably turned of sixty. It was impossible to imagine any thing more venerable, more mildly contemplative, more truly expressive of worth, honour, and sense, than his serious but benignant aspect. Tall and thin, his figure, bent more by sorrow than by years, still retained much of its ori-

ginal elegance, and all its former dignity. He received the Colonel with friendly politeness; thanked him for so early a mark of his remembrance; and half smiling, added: "I rejected on your account *two* other visitors who proposed this morning to assist at my solitary breakfast. My niece was one, and Mr. Melbourne the other. He wrote me a note late yesterday evening, to say he was arrived, and to invite himself to my levee: but I thought, that as you would not come up last night when Mrs. Melross was here, you might have something to say to me upon business; and I therefore declined receiving him till after dinner."

"I am not sorry that you did, Sir William," said the Colonel; for although I have no business to talk over that need interfere with the admission of breakfast, yet, perhaps before I go, I may apply to you for a little advice, on an affair of material consequence to some friends I came with from India, who are involved in a good deal of perplexity, and whose story, I think, will interest you. But with an empty stomach, I really can enter into no details of other people's adventures; and

since you are so good as to promise me an hour or two of your time, the matter may well be deferred till after the entrance and exit of your tea urn."

Upon this, Sir William rung for the breakfast equipage; and during the time they sat over their coffee, the two gentlemen conversed only upon general topics; such as, the affairs connected with the office which Sir William had just resigned; and the plans that each had formed for the future distribution of their time. The Baronet professed a fixed determination to retire wholly into the country, and to divide, between agriculture and books, the remaining hours of his now lonely pilgrimage. Beauchamp opposed nothing to this design: but secretly flattered himself, that in his custody was lodged the charm that would dissolve a dream of rustic seclusion so ill adapted to Sir William's active turn of mind, and the taste he had long indulged for scientific, polished, and intellectual society.

The breakfast cloth being removed, and the servants withdrawn, Sir William, with that benevolent courtesy that accompanied

all his offers of service, said: "I hope now, my dear Colonel, that you will delay no longer to inform me in what way I can render myself useful to the friends of whom you were speaking. Tell me, plainly and frankly, is it advice merely that you seek for them, or would aid of a more substantial nature be desirable? Command me to the extent of my power, in any way that can be most conducive to their advantage."

"I despair," cried Beauchamp, "of thanking you as I ought, dear Sir, for this extraordinary kindness: but be assured that I feel it most sensibly. To come now to business, however.—It will be necessary, before we attempt to decide in what mode your powerful assistance can best contribute to benefit my clients, that I should trouble you with the relation of some particulars connected with my own affairs, which I fear, from their association with a lamented event, never to be forgotten by either of us, will give you considerable pain. I beg you to believe, that neither on your account nor my own, I would touch upon so trying a subject, were it not essential to the clear developement of the case I have at heart."

Sir William, readily anticipating the theme upon which he meant to expatiate, leaned his head upon his hand, fixed his eyes on the floor, and prepared himself to listen with mournful but unshrinking firmness.

After a short pause, Beauchamp, though in a tone less steady than he had begun, thus proceeded: "We both, my dear Sir William, in the vessel which was cast away, had a wife—had a child! There was on board, also, an officer, young, and a man of fortune, family, and high expectations, who, during the voyage manifested eminent kindness to my poor boy, and conducted himself with the respect and affection of a son towards that boy's unfortunate mother. This youth, by miracle, was saved—and he saved my son!"

Sir William's hand dropped from his face, and he turned on Beauchamp a congratulating but almost incredulous eye, which seemed to say: "Is this really an authenticated fact?"

"Yes," resumed the Colonel; "he preserved my boy; and Providence, by means still more wonderful, preserved two

other individuals, educated, and well-born females; the one, a very lovely girl, the other, her parent. Lashed to a broken mast, they were floated from the wreck during the night, and at day-break found themselves upon the beach of an uninhabited, but not unproductive island. They subsisted, I scarcely know how long, in this desert spot, without suspecting that a single being except themselves had survived the storm. My boy and his protector accidentally were discovered to them. The presence of this last, his exertions to lighten their calamity, his energy of spirit, and sanguine persistence in hope, cheered their solitude, and almost converted it into an Eden. The youngest of the two females had, from the first moment that he saw her, worn the garb of a boy, and as a boy, whom he treated with the kindness of an elder brother, he long considered her. But the serenity of their lives was soon and fatally interrupted. Two wretches, outcasts even from their own marauding associates, landed on the little territory. The mother took alarm for her child; she was seized with a fever; a sudden change in the temperature of the air,

and the influence of unwholesome vapours, probably contributed to accelerate her dissolution. She expired in the officer's arms, and with her dying breath, revealed to him the deception that had been practised, and bequeathed her daughter to his guardianship. He swore to be faithful to the trust; and to that oath his adherence has been holy and true. He dug the grave of the unhappy parent, and remained with his defenceless charge in the wilderness, throughout the whole rainy season. He attached himself to her with passion, yet invariably respected her innocence; he toiled for her accommodation; he laboured for her support; he consoled her in affliction; he was her lover, friend, and benefactor, and the most honourable of protectors. This young man, Sir William, and his irreproachable companion, by means which hereafter it may interest you to hear related, effected their escape from the island, and were taken up in the broad Indian Ocean from an open boat in which they had been exposed a whole day and night, and brought to England in the very ship I was myself on board. They are now in London—now at my house,

and the child whose life I owe to the generous officer, is the partner of their present security, as he was of their former dangers."

Sir William, long since diverted from the stoicism he had affected when the Colonel first begun, here interrupted the summary narrative, and with an animation that Beauchamp exulted in witnessing, said:

"And are these the friends, my dear Colonel, whom you wish me to serve?—Explain to me only what there is I can perform for them, and be persuaded that not only now, but as long as life is lent me, I shall be most zealous in assisting you to pay the debt of gratitude they have laid upon you."

Beauchamp warmly renewed his thanks; and then, auguring more and more favourably of the result of the conversation, thus proceeded: "On your influence over the father of the young lady, a man of high consideration, now resident in London, her only hope reposes of overcoming the objections which she fears he may make to an alliance with her preserver."

"Do I then know her father? Who is he?"

"You know him, I believe, better than most men may be said to know themselves: but you are still to be informed that the young officer, unhappily, incurred, three or four years ago, the severest displeasure of this gentleman; and is now, perhaps justly, in the greatest terror, lest, on account of that misunderstanding, his concurrence to the match should be withheld. Will you have the generosity to plead for him? Will you represent to the hitherto inveterate parent, as strongly as you appear to feel, the exalted merit of this young man's conduct, and endeavour to convince him, that if he perseveres in his former animosity, he will give a proof to the world of culpable ingratitude, of inexorable hardness of heart, which will injure his own fame—which his greatest admirers must condemn, and his very enemies will scarcely credit!"

"My good friend," said Sir William, "go to the father yourself; the mission can never be in better hands; relate to him the 'round, unvarnished tale' I have just heard you deliver, and it will speak for itself: no eloquence can be required—no interest demanded to give efficiency to such a story.

I cannot conceive it possible, that a really paternal heart could hear it unmoved. Oh, where is the enemy," he feelingly added, "to whom *I* could have refused my lost darling, had it pleased Heaven to have given her such a preserver!"

"Indeed, Sir William!" cried Beauchamp, expressively.

"Why that implied doubt, Colonel? am I, in your opinion, of so very irreconcileable a nature?"

"You are, in my opinion, and I think you know it, a man of as warm a heart towards your friends, and of as compassionate a one towards the distressed, as any, perhaps, in existence: but---that you are not easily conciliated when once offended---that your resentments are nearly as strong as your attachments, I fear will admit no question. Recollect, Sir William, your feelings in regard to some of those, who, in times passed, had the misfortune of being ranked amongst your enemies: recollect, for instance, your indignation against young Fitz Aymer, and then tell me, whether the facts I have communicated, had they related to him and to your sweet daughter,

would have sufficiently outweighed your anger, to induce you cordially to receive him as her husband?"

"This, alas! is imagining so wild an impossibility, that I scarcely know how to put myself in the predicament of one called upon, in such a case, for a decision. But as well as I can judge of my own heart by the effect your narrative has produced upon it, I think, that even Fitz Aymer, under the circumstances we are supposing, would be secure of obtaining from me my child."

The secret exultation of Beauchamp, at having brought his auditor to this point, was so great, that he was forced to give a few moments to deliberation ere he ventured to proceed. When able once more to command an appearance of calmness, he slowly, and with almost trembling caution, drew Lady Earlingford's letter from his pocket, and holding it with the direction downwards, said: "The paper now in my hand, was written in her last moments, and addressed to her husband, by the mother of the young lady whose history you have just heard. I have been permitted to read it, and but that I fear it might agitate you too

strongly, I could wish, Sir William, that you would read it also. The hand writing, however, will make you start; for, were it less irregular, I should say," he hesitatingly added, "that it resembles that of your—admirable wife!"

"Of my wife!" repeated Sir William, changing colour, and hastily rising. "Merciful Heaven! what is it you mean?"

"Be calm, my honoured friend! I mean only good; I mean, as well as one so unskilful knows how, to prepare you for approaching happiness. Reflect—consider, what the blessing is, that, were it restored, would most contribute to the comfort of your whole remaining life. Give the reins, without fear, to your imagination, for I scarcely think it can soar beyond the reality of bliss now awaiting you!"

As the colonel concluded this sentence, and with outstretched hand approached the venerable baronet, that most touching of human sights—the face of age bathed in tears—met his view! Erect, though trembling—his streaming eyes uplifted—his hands clasped and raised to Heaven, the entranced parent was pouring forth to the

Dispenser of such unlooked-for felicity, the pious tribute of his ardent and soul-felt thanks. This grateful duty fulfilled, his thoughts revisited earth:---he turned to Beauchamp, and supporting his tottering frame with one hand upon the shoulder of that sympathizing friend, said: "You have been, by the gracious selection of Providence, the instrument of conveying so much rapture to my heart, that I want words to give it utterance! Oh, my friend, complete your work! Bring my newly-found treasure to these arms! I pine---I sicken to behold her once again!"

"This I, in some degree, anticipated," said the colonel, "and orders were given by me accordingly, to have your carriage held in readiness, either to convey you at a moment's notice to your daughter at my house, or to conduct her to your presence here. Which do you decide upon?"

"That which will least retard the blessed meeting!—I will go to your house."

Beauchamp rung the bell, and gave the necessary directions, and in three minutes, the vehicle was at the door. During the short interval that elapsed before its arrival,

Sir William, with a sigh, demanded the letter of his wife:—the Colonel immediately presented it to him; but at the same time, said; "Defer reading it, dear Sir William, till a calmer moment. Mingle not with the joy to which you have so long been a stranger, the sadness with which a letter written by one so honoured and so mourned would oppress you. That I have been its bearer, sufficiently proves that its contents are highly favourable to Fitz Aymer;—so, I trust, my friend, are your feelings.—You will not refuse to see him after your interview with his fair charge?"

"Refuse to see him!" cried Sir William —"Oh, no, no!—let me clasp them to my heart together."

Leaning upon Beauchamp's arm, weakened and shaking from excess of happiness, he now descended to the carriage. As if conscious that some affair of importance was in agitation, the coachman drove with a velocity that made the distance between the two abodes appear short even to his impatient master. Within a few doors of his own dwelling, however, the colonel pulled the check-string; got out alone,—rung

instead of knocking for admittance, and enjoining silence to the servants, went back, and brought Sir William without noise into the house.

These precautions were not greater than appeared fully requisite, when, (though alone) he presented himself before Viola. Her tremour on beholding him surpassed description. She could ask no questions, but her eyes seemed to pierce into his very soul;—her ears hung upon his accents; and, as by slow and circumspect gradations, he revealed, in answer to Fitz Aymer's fearful enquiries, the event of his embassy, her countenance insensibly kindled into an expression of rapture of which no language can give the faintest idea. Like her father, gratitude to Heaven was her first impulse: she sunk upon her knees regardless of the presence of human observers, and addressed the warm effusions of her thankful heart to the merciful Bestower of a happiness which now knew no alloy.—Then rising, and taking Fitz Aymer's arm, she drew him towards Colonel Beauchamp, saying: "Here, here is the indefatigable friend to whose agency on earth we are indebted for this

moment of delicious—of perfect joy!—Dearest Fitz Aymer, help me to find words expressive of what I feel;—help me to thank, and unite me in blessing him, for so much zeal and goodness!"

Fitz Aymer, his whole aspect irradiated and glowing, wrung the colonel's hand with eloquent though silent transport, and snatching Viola to his heart, felt, during the few moments he held her there, that felicity in this stage of existence could reach no higher!—Viola, colouring, yet smiling withdrew herself from his arms, and again turning to the colonel, eagerly said: "When, oh, when, best and kindest of men! will you lead us to the dear, dear parent your intercessions have rendered so propitious to us!—Could you but imagine how I yearn to see him,—how I long to hear him bless me,---to hear him bless my generous Fitz Aymer, you would take us to his presence this very instant!---I can walk---I think I could fly, to embrace him!"

Beauchamp, assured that further precautions were needless, now, placing her arm within his, and by a look inviting Fitz Aymer to follow, led her out of the room.

CHAP XVII.

———————You Gods, look down,
And from your sacred vials pour your graces
Upon my daughter's head!—Tell me, mine own,
Where hast thou been preserved? where lived?

SHAKESPEAR.

The bliss obtained by grateful friendship's aid
Is doubly bliss! And the boon that's granted
In recompense of virtue, gives a glow
Of honourable triumph to the heart,
Which ne'er shall visit the cold breast of him
Who to blind Fortune owes unearned success.

As they were descending the first flight of stairs, the Colonel gently intimated, that Sir William was actually in the house,---was waiting to receive his daughter in the study! —Viola listened to no more; but with a scream impossible to repress, springing from his hold, she bounded down the remaining stairs, and flinging open the study door, rushed to Sir William's feet, exclaiming in broken accents: "My father,---my most

beloved father!---Oh, take, take me to your heart!" Her tears now choaked her utterance; those of Sir William scarcely flowed less copiously: but raising, and with a tenderness which none but an almost idolizing parent could feel, straining her to his bosom, he faultered out:---"My own Viola; my soul's delight!---dearest of created beings! do I live once more to see thy angel face!—to call myself again a father!---Oh, where, where, thou precious reviver of joy in this aged heart! where is thy noble, thy invaluable preserver?"

Fitz Aymer, who from motives of delicacy had stood during the first agitation of their meeting, respectfully aloof, now gratefully sprung forward, and was received by Sir William with expanded arms, and folded in the same embrace with Viola: "My children!" cried the venerable parent, "be ye blessed for ever in each other's love! No greater felicity can Heaven in its utmost bounty impart to me, than that of witnessing your mutual and well-earned happiness! Fitz Aymer, admit me as a father---as a friend, to your generous heart!---I have learned, I hope not too late, to estimate its

real worth,---to deplore my past injustice! ---You are now the son of my proudest choice; and had I, in testimony of my full approbation of your union, the whole wealth of that land I so lately quitted, to accumulate upon your head, joyfully should it accompany the gift of this beloved creature's hand!"

Melted by so much kindness, the feelings of Fitz Aymer betrayed themselves in his glistening eyes, whilst warmly returning the pressure of Sir William's hand, he said: "The only addition you could make, dearest Sir, to the obligation of conferring upon me such a prize, would be that of hastening the moment when I may indeed call her my own,—my wedded Viola!"

Sir William gently smiled, and looking at his blushing daughter, said; "Plead your cause here, Fitz Aymer,—and tell this darling of both our hearts, that from me you have no reason to apprehend the delay even of an hour in the accomplishment of your union, after the arrangement has been completed of those legal dispositions of property, without attending to which no human being---insecure as is hu-

man existence---ought to approach the altar.---But, my children," he added, leading them towards a sofa, and seating himself between them, " ere we talk of the future, let me more fully enjoy the present: let me gaze at this dear Viola, whom I left a mere child, and now, with the same artlessness of countenance, find transformed into an intelligent, and—may I say it, Fitz Aymer? —attractive young woman.---Let me hear from your own lips the detailed account of what you have undergone; nothing, to one so interested in your fate, can be too minute,---nothing, to ears so long disused to the music of any voice they loved, can be unimportant in which you are implicated. ---I had calculated upon a remnant of life so cheerless and so desolate, that now, merely to look upon,---to hear, two beings whose tenderness I feel assured will sooth my passage to the grave,---whose kindness will give interest to every hour of my prolonged existence, is happiness almost too great to be borne !"

Viola, deeply touched, threw herself upon his bosom, exclaiming---" And is this the parent---the dear indulgent parent, I have

been so causelessly apprehensive, though so solicitous, to meet?---How gentle, how re-assuring is every word he utters!---Oh, what arrears of gratitude must I not pay you, my loved father, to make reparation for my unnatural distrust!"

A long and circumstantial conversation now ensued, painful in many of its details both to the speakers and hearer, but most desirable for the full elucidation to Sir William, of every occurrence which, in the eventful period of their separation, had befallen his lamented wife, and long-despaired-of daughter. In that daughter's presence he, at length, though with extreme emotion, ventured to open Lady Earlingford's letter.—Its perusal was in no respect less trying to his feelings than Colonel Beauchamp had anticipated; yet, considering it as a sacred duty not to shrink from the task, Sir William overcame his agitation sufficiently to go through it with the solemn deliberation it merited; and found his best support and consolation during the melancholy effort in dwelling upon the high testimony which, at so awful a moment, his wife had borne to the virtues and honour of

Fitz Aymer. Divested wholly of the prejudices which had once blinded him to all but Fitz Aymer's indiscretions, he now,---in reverting to the sweeping conclusions which, with such want of liberality he had formerly drawn against him,---traced and adored that supreintending Power, which through paths thorny, indeed, but sure, had guided the noble-minded young man to the heart of his most determined enemy,---to the attainment of unmixed esteem, and almost boundless admiration.

Hours, which appeared but minutes, were spent in these recapitulations, and in the comments to which they gave rise,---and still Sir William's attention was unwearied ---still something remained to be asked and answered. The Colonel, however, who had long resigned to them the undisturbed possession of his room, judging, as the dinner hour approached, that his discretion had been exercised sufficiently, ventured to appear amongst them with a message from his sister, requesting that they would all accompany him into the eating parlour. Surprised to hear that the day was so far advanced, Sir William immediately arose, and

thanking the hospitable Beauchamp, expressed much concern at being obliged to decline the invitation: "But you remember, my friend," continued he, "what I told you at breakfast respecting the appointment I had made for this evening with Mr. Melbourne: I must not be so self-indulgent as to remain here, and suffer him, punctual as I know he will be, to keep his engagement in vain. He will probably be with me as soon as I have dined. When he departs, I shall send the carriage, my Viola, to bring you to that paternal mansion which your presence will once more so sweetly gladden, and which you must now only quit to be installed, as its mistress, in the house of your excellent Fitz Aymer.---Meanwhile," concluded the Baronet, "I invite both gentlemen present, to accompany you, and conclude this happy day at my habitation; and if Mrs. Villiers can be prevailed upon to join the party, assure her that I shall be truly sensible of the favour she confers upon us."

"We have been to that lady," said Viola, "such remiss and unprofitable guests, that I shall be almost ashamed to see her."

"She is now," cried her brother, "fully acquainted with the causes of your seclusion this morning, and feels too much satisfaction at their happy removal, to entertain any other wish than that of congratulating and embracing you. But, Fitz Aymer," continued the worthy Soldier, smiling with a significance somewhat provoking, "how do you bear the information, that Sir William has made so questionable an appointment with the formidable Mr. Melbourne? ---Do none of your late qualms return upon you? Do you think yourself quite as secure of installing the fair Viola in the residence of your forefathers, as when ignorant that so alarming a conference was impending?"

Fitz Aymer smiled, and looking gratefully at the baronet, answered with modest confidence: "Yes, my dear Colonel, *quite!* The word of Sir William Earlingford once passed, must be irrevocable;---it is a bond that I would not exchange for any security which the united legal authorities of Europe could give me; and I repose my hopes upon it, with a firmness of reliance that nothing can shake!"

Sir William, pleased at his warmth, held

out his hand to him; whilst the Colonel, still bent upon discovering how the baronet was prepared to disengage himself honourably from the promise which it was understood he had formerly given to Mr. Melbourne, said, still addressing Fitz Aymer: "But, my good fellow, if, being *once* engaged, Sir William, according to your notion, is *always* engaged, what becomes of the contract which he was said to have entered into with Melbourne, previous to the embarkation of our Viola for India?"

"It was, at most, a conditional contract," resumed Sir William: "this dear girl may be well assured that her hand would never have been compulsively bestowed. Had she approved Melbourne's person and manners, it would, at that time, have been a considerable satisfaction to me to have seen her united to him. I owed him the best compensation in my power for an exertion of arbitrary authority which had produced, both to himself and others, so much wretchedness, that I shall ever consider it as one of the most reprehensible parts of my conduct at any period of life. The recompense, however," added he, smiling, "as well for

that act of tyranny, as for my present breach of engagement, is now, I trust, in my gift. The lady I once thought him too poor to marry, and harshly disposed of to another, is again unfettered, and may again be induced to listen to his vows. My niece Melross was his first love, and—is now a widow."

Scarcely could Fitz Aymer himself hear with more pleasure this confirmation that every obstacle arising from Sir William's past covenant with Mr. Melbourne was at an end, than Viola experienced on learning that Mrs. Melross, though no longer a wife, was again destined, probably, soon to become such. It is not in nature, that a woman much in love, should anticipate without terror, the renewed intercourse of the man to whom she has given her heart, with one of her own sex who has shewn him a manifest degree of preference. Had Matilda Melross, after the death of her husband, continued single, and retained her past facilities of communication with Fitz Aymer, Viola, with all her candour—with all her confidence in the sincerity of his affection, felt nearly certain that she

should, at least occasionally, have been truly miserable.

When Sir William paused, Beauchamp, adverting to the singular pertinacity with which Mr. Melbourne during the voyage had often contemplated Viola, in consequence, as he asserted, of her resemblance to a lady he had formerly loved, now said, looking scrutinizingly at her: "I begin at last to see that there was some foundation for this imputed likeness. There certainly is, between the two cousins, a sort of family similarity of features, which, though not very obvious to common observers, might be very palpable to a lover. How came it, in the name of Cupid! never to strike *you*, Fitz Aymer?"

"Even now that its pretended existence is pointed out to me," answered Fitz Aymer, "I cannot perceive the slightest ground for subscribing to its reality. It is not merely in complexion—in the colour of eyes and hair, that Viola and Mrs. Melross differ; but in the character of their countenance—in tone of voice—in gestures—in habitual modes of expression. However," he continued gaily, "if Mr. Melbourne's very

ostensible admiration of *one* cousin was only indicative of his unshaken loyalty to the *other*, I have ample reason to be satisfied, and no sort of ambition ever to hear it proved, that he distinguished Viola so eminently in compliment to her own attractions!"

Reinstated, after so long an absence, in the home of her infancy, the dear abode in which she had tasted from her birth only care and tenderness, Viola's happiness would have known no draw-back, had her mother but survived to partake and witness it. The first sight of the apartment which Lady Earlingford had been wont to inhabit, of the innumerable objects dispersed throughout the house which had been peculiarly appropriated to her, and, above all, the picture of her that hung over the drawing-room chimney, filled the heart of her lovely descendant, even at this period of joy, with a sadness which, though she strove to hide, it was impossible not to feel. By degrees, however, her sorrow mellowed into gentle reverence for the memory, and unfading gratitude for the kindness of this lost maternal friend; and the love and at-

tention which, when Lady Earlingford lived, Viola had divided between her parents, she now transferred wholly to her venerable father.

The delay recommended by Sir William, for the purpose of making settlements, postponed the marriage of his daughter only long enough to heighten, at the hour of its celebration, the felicity of Fitz Aymer, by the arrival in England of his brother in time to be present at the ceremony. That brother, in whom she found all the manly and estimable qualities which she had been taught to expect, soon gained in the heart of his new sister as distinguished a place as Fitz Aymer had often foretold his merit could not fail to ensure. At the end of some weeks he joined the bride and bridegroom in the country; and with Sir William Earlingford—ever the most loved and revered of their guests—and the friendly Colonel Beauchamp, spent with them nearly the whole ensuing winter.

Mrs. Melross, a few months after the marriage of Viola, gave her hand to Mr. Melbourne, and with it, restored to him that affection the early disappointment of

which had so materially tended to produce whatever was subsequently wrong in her conduct and feelings. Forcibly separated, before she was twenty, from a man possessed of her whole heart, and united from motives of interest, to one whom she never could do more than coldly esteem, she wanted dignity of mind to submit with steady courage to her fate, and principle to discern the aggravated misery she would incur, in attempting by guilty means to improve it. Her passion for Fitz Aymer had been more the offspring of exaggerated gratitude, and a romantic imagination, than either of vice, or genuine sensibility. She called herself wretched in being the wife of Mr. Melross: the object of her first attachment was far away; she grew impatient of the void left in her heart; and imprudently incurring obligations from a generous, spirited, but thoughtless young man, who, she concluded, must have been actuated in conferring them by love, was so unhappily misguided by that pernicious enthusiasm, which, if not criminal in itself, so often, by the systematic contempt of public opinion which it encourages, leads to criminality,

as to resolve upon throwing herself, unsolicited, under his protection. When saved from the perpetration of this irremediably disgraceful step, and led back to the house of her husband, she owed her subsequent respectability in the eyes of the world, and the clear perception to herself of the folly of her conduct, to the countenance she received from, and the mild admonitions of, Lady Earlingford. Mr. Melross never knew her temporary defection from duty: her uncle, stung by self-reproach for having, at so early an age, sacrificed her at the shrine of wealth,—forgave it; and, naturally more disposed to good than evil, she learned to bend to necessity, to accommodate her spirit to her circumstances, and during the two years that preceded her husband's death, conducted herself, as she had invariably done since, with the strictest propriety.

Watson, the meritorious companion of the most disastrous period of the solitude of Viola and Fitz Aymer, was invited to follow them to the seat at which they spent the first months of their marriage; and when there, informing them that in his youth he had been accustomed to the em-

ployments of a husbandman, he was established in a small farm, where his only surviving daughter, the widow of a labourer, came to reside with him, and assisted in promoting the comfort and happiness of his declining years.

Though we are not invariably to look for the punishment of the guilty in this world, yet, no doubt, it often is made tremendously apparent. That of the younger Lamotte was as signal as it was expeditious. He had not been three days on board the vessel which conveyed him from the island, when, upon some quarrel with one of the Lascars, he received a stab, of which, after great sufferings, he expired in less than twelve hours. He confessed, in dying, many of his enormities, to the captain of the ship, and gave every information necessary, as to the real circumstances attending the disappearance of Watson. In consequence of his deposition, a second effort was made to land upon the island, in hopes of bringing the Seaman off: but the weather was so bad, and the approach to the coast in almost every point, so dangerous, that it proved unsuccessful, and the design was forced to be abandoned. Watson,

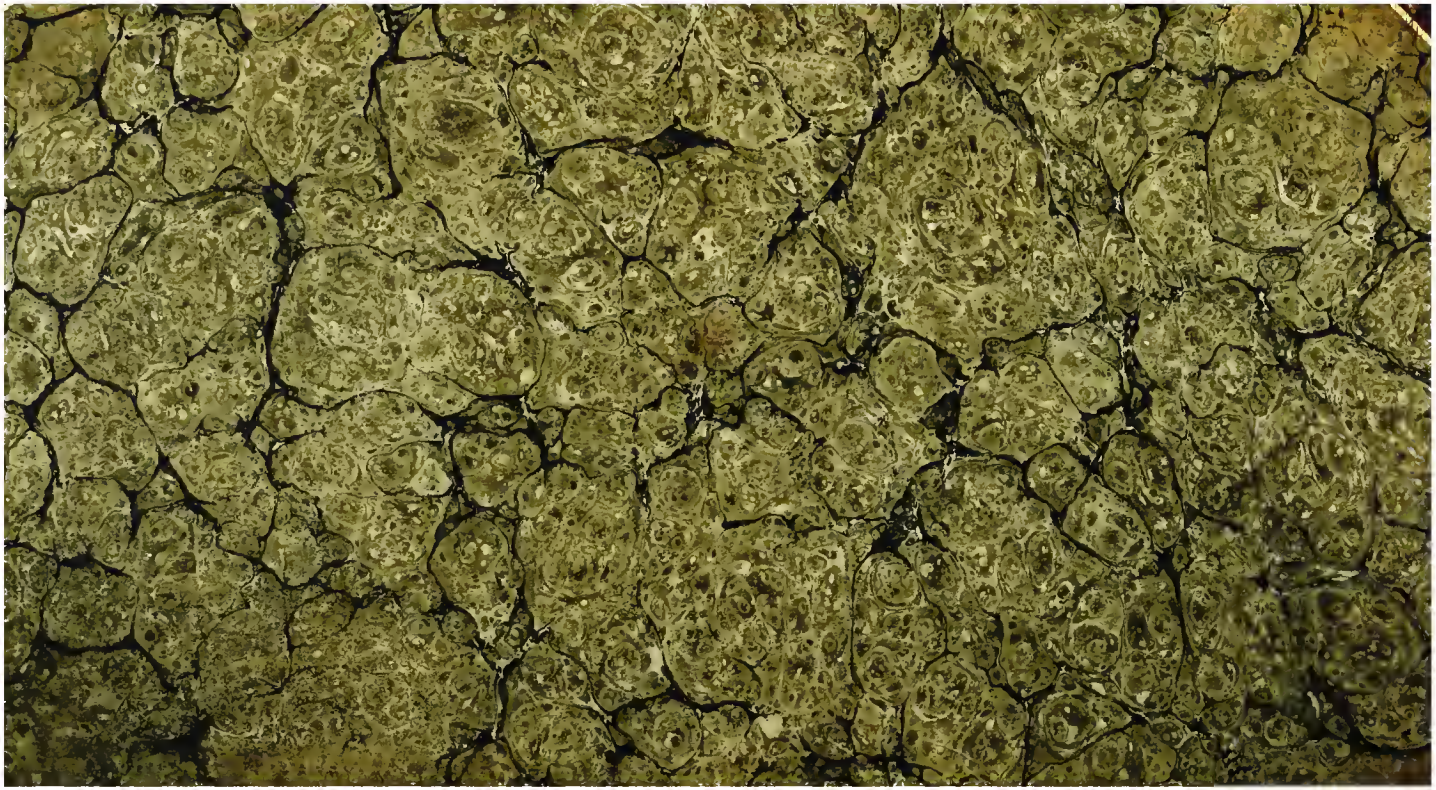
thus consigned to his fate, remained ignorant a considerable time, that any effort had ever been made for his rescue. Being, however, on business some years after, in London, and accidentally meeting with one of the men who had belonged to the ship, he learned the particulars of their attempt and its failure, and the penalty which had overtaken the villainous author of his desertion. The veteran Seaman was kind-hearted, and, generally speaking, placable: but it must be acknowledged, that on hearing how speedily the sins of Lamotte had been chastised by one of the very instruments he had employed in perpetrating his most flagitious act—he rubbed his hands with something approaching to exultation; and afterwards, in relating the affair to Fitz Aymer, said: "I hope there's no great harm, your Honour, in thinking, that since there was no way of getting at the fellow to hang him here lawfully upon British ground, the Lascar did a special service to the world, by ridding it, at the risk of his own soul, of so infernal a pest! He cannot be so bad as the ruffian he murdered—so I hope he will find mercy!"

Fitz Aymer himself had prognosticated

rightly, when, in the island, he had told Lady Earlingford, that the lessons he was receiving from adversity would not be thrown away upon him. In all respects, and throughout life, the improvement his character derived from the 'rigid lore' of that 'stern, rugged' monitress, was eminently apparent. Without deducting from his animation, the severe probation through which he had passed had mellowed his temper and opinions; strengthened his principles of religion, and sensibly conduced to awaken his commiseration, and ensure his readiest good offices for all who were unfortunate.—The opportunity likewise which his exile afforded him, of contracting a genuine, disinterested, and virtuous passion, for an object whose purity and innocence it had been his delight to contemplate, and his pride to protect, in no small degree contributed to the amelioration of his nature. Encircled by 'troops of friends;' loved, honoured, and served with joy equal to that he felt in serving others, few lives could be more blessed, more useful, or more precious to all within his influence.

Different in many respects were the effects of misfortune upon his early associate,

Frederick Germaine: yet, even to him, it was not wholly profitless. His generous sister, with the first money placed at her disposal after she became a widow, paid the most pressing of his debts, liberated him from confinement, and purchased for him a commission in a regiment immediately going abroad. Thus, removing him from his former haunts of dissipation, she gave him the best chance of retrieving his injured character, and of benefitting, by the opportunity, of contracting, amongst new connexions, better propensities and less irregular habits. His convivial powers made him as much as ever the delight of society; but his licentious extravagance no longer rendered him so dangerous a companion. He never refined into a really exemplary individual; but he ceased to be regarded by his family either as a burthen or a disgrace; and if he made no very solid friends, and established no very brilliant reputation, he at least provoked not any rancorous hostility, nor incurred any serious future stigma.

END OF 'THE SHIPWRECK.'

B. Clarke, Printer, Well Street, London.